

2015 Cats for a Cause - University of Kentucky Alumni National Service Week

FINAL SUMMARY

- Designated week each fall for UK alumni clubs to organize and participate in a service activity in their local community
 - Chance for UK alumni to serve not only their university, but make a difference in the lives of members of their own communities
 - Projects provide Wildcats of all ages - recent graduates, seasoned alumni, families and friends – with an opportunity to get involved
 - Combined efforts have a tremendous impact around the Commonwealth and across the country and help spread Wildcat pride
 - Program started in 2008 and has grown to include more than 30 UK Alumni clubs and 400+ volunteers annually
 - Initially conceived as “Blue Cares,” the inspiration for the program came from an annual day of community service for students known as UK FUSION (For Unity and Service In Our Neighborhood) held at the beginning of each school year
 - Clubs are encouraged to partner with other charitable organizations, churches, schools, etc. in their local community to enhance the lives of others who are less fortunate
 - Service activities range from collecting items for local food banks to volunteering at local schools, churches and shelters to raising money for charitable organizations to community building projects
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- In 2015, the Cats for a Cause program included 34 community service projects in 15 states across the Big Blue Nation
 - Highlights from this year’s projects:
 - **Greater Ashland** (Kentucky) club partnered with the **Ashland Animal Rescue Fund** to raise money to help pay for vaccinations and other medical care for animals in their rescue program
 - **Central Ohio** club members participated in the Light the Night Walk benefitting the **Leukemia and Lymphoma Society** and raised more than \$1,000
 - Members of the **Chicagoland** club teamed up with other volunteers to re-package more than 15,000 pounds of food at the **Greater Chicago Food Depository**
 - UK alumni in **Danville/Boyle County** (Kentucky) collected more than 300 food items for the **Salvation Army Food Pantry** and even challenged local UofL alumni to match their efforts – of course, Cats’ contributions totally overwhelmed those from Cards fans!
 - **Daviess County** (Kentucky) club members served food at the **St. Benedict’s Homeless Shelter** on two consecutive weekends

- Members of the **Dayton** (Ohio) club raised almost \$900 by participating in a 5k walk/run sponsored by the **Pancreatic Cancer Action Network** in memory of a past club president who passed away in 2014
 - **Fayette County** (Kentucky) club members donated more than 195 pounds of food and toiletries in support of the **Big Blue Pantry** in addition to taking part in a local **Habitat for Humanity** Build project
 - Almost 50 individuals were fed and received fellowship from **Fulton County** (Kentucky) club members who volunteered for the **First United Methodist Church Free Lunch Program**
 - Members of the **Hopkins County** (Kentucky) club planted 100 “BLUEberry” bushes at a local park as part of a community garden initiative. Proceeds from the sale of the fruit will benefit the **Growing Warriors Project**.
 - **Jacksonville** (Florida) club members participated in a fundraising event for a local teenager awaiting a heart transplant. The **Children’s Organ Transplant Association’s** Heart for Hunter Hoedown raised money to help families offset expenses.
 - Club members in **New York City** volunteered at a public school in Harlem as part of the **New York Cares** program and painted a 50’ mural, cleaned the school garden and organize donated books in the newly renovated library.
 - Volunteers from the **San Diego** club sorted, weighed, and bagged over 2,500 lbs. of oranges, pomegranates and apples for the **Feeding America San Diego** project
 - **Sarasota/Sun Coast** (Florida) club members assisted counselors with equine therapy sessions for special needs individuals at the **Sarasota Manatee Association for Riding Therapy**
 - Members of the **St. Louis** club participated in the **Pedal for a Cause** event and raised almost \$15,000 for **pediatric cancer research**
 - **Triangle North Carolina** club members donated more than \$2,000 in goods and monetary gifts for the **Ronald McDonald House of Durham** and the **Inn at Wake Medical Center**
- Quotes from 2015 Participants and Recipients:
 - “A heartfelt thank you to our wonderful community for an awesome response at our supply drive today! AARF greatly appreciated the area UK alumni that volunteered with us. We are truly blessed!” – *representative from Ashland Animal Rescue Fund*
 - “It was a rainy and dreary morning, but we got out there early and had a lot of fun!” – *Matthew Rust, Charlotte UK Alumni Club member and volunteer at the Isabella Santos Foundation 5K/10K and Fun Run to support the fight against pediatric cancer*
 - “The end result is that regardless of the participants' school allegiance, the Salvation Army Food Pantry was the winner.” – *Jim Jacobus, Danville/Boyle County UK Alumni*

Club member and organizer of food drive in response to the friendly competition between UK and UofL supporters who contributed

- “All of us that participated commented that as appreciative as the folks were at the homeless shelter, the event actually did more for us individually. Personally, I contacted one of the local churches that serve there regularly and asked them to put me on their list.” – *Jeremy Edge, Daviess County UK Alumni Club member and volunteer organizer for St. Benedict’s Homeless Shelter service project*
- "We were unaware of food insecurity at UK. It is so sad to think that students may not have enough money for food. Thank you for bringing to my attention that there is this need at UK." – *anonymous Fayette County UK Alumni Club member at Cat Cluster event in support of Big Blue Pantry*
- "It was hard work, but worth the effort." "I've never planted anything to this extent, but it was a lot of fun." "I have blisters on my hands - I should've worn gloves!" "It was so appropriate to plant BLUEberry bushes!" – *various quotes from Hopkins County UK Alumni Club members who participated in planting blueberry bushes in new city park in support of Growing Warriors Project*
- “We had the opportunity to meet a special teen and his family. COTA helps families offset the expenses of transplants. Hunter has been on the waiting list for a heart for over two years. He cannot travel outside a two- hour radius of Gainesville. His family has created Flat Hunter for people to take with them on their vacations. We plan to bring Flat Hunter to Rupp Arena for a game.” – *Nicole Blackwelder, Jacksonville UK Alumni Club member and participant in Children’s Organ Transplant Association (COTA) fundraiser*
- “This is a very successful community project for our group. Members are very excited to donate items, new ones they buy plus those obtained through hotel stays.” – *Marlene Perdan, Northeast Ohio UK Alumni Club member and organizer of food and toiletries drive for Divine Outreach Ministries homeless shelter*
- “Our club enjoys helping at the City Gospel each year. It is very eye opening and rewarding.” – *Mindy Bailey, Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati UK Alumni Club member and volunteer at City Gospel Mission Breakfast project*
- “This was a wonderful experience that we would not have had if we had not been seeking service projects and I am personally grateful for it.” – *Stephanie Harper, Sarasota/Sun Coast UK Alumni Club member and volunteer at Sarasota Manatee Association for Riding Therapy*

- "Thank you so much for the generous donation from Cats for a Cause. It is clear that your advocacy and leadership made an enormous impact on how many of your club members participated. So many families will have a warm cup of soup, a clean and safe space, a free night of stay and most importantly will be able to stay close to their children during a difficult time because of your work." – *house coordinator at Ronald McDonald House of Durham*
- "I learned through this activity how many of our members, including myself, have had personal experiences with the Ronald McDonald House Charities in one form or another with their own children at some point and time in their lives. This was really a very heartwarming experience for me." – *Mimms Van Meter, Triangle NC UK Alumni Club member and organizer of donation drive for Ronald McDonald House of Durham*