



*Path To Shine received a \$30,917 General Grant from ECF over two years (2018 & 2019) in partnership with multiple churches in the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta.*

A child born into poverty in Atlanta has only a 4% chance of making it into the metro area’s highest income bracket.[1]

In other words, without an intervention, poor children will almost certainly live their entire lives in poverty, and educational quality is strongly correlated with upward mobility. COVID-19 certainly is making the situation worse. Path To Shine, a Jubilee Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, is committed to breaking the cycle of poverty one family at a time.

## **Providing a Place to Grow**

Path To Shine helps underserved students achieve their dreams by educating and encouraging them to first stay in school, then graduate high school, and ultimately go on to college. Volunteer mentors provide tutoring, build study skills, and help children develop self-confidence.

The program was started 10 years ago at St. Benedict’s Episcopal Church by executive director Deacon Leslie-Ann Drake, growing to 20 locations. Each site provides local elementary school children books, snacks, and eager volunteers to read stories and play games. Since its inception, Path To Shine has inspired nearly 200 children.

Path To Shine uses fun, comradery, personalized attention, and a focus on educational achievement to help students overcome one of the most important causes of generational poverty: parental education. In Georgia, 25% of children live in poor families, and 59% of children whose parents do not have a high school degree live in poor families.[2]

## **Consistency**

Children love the program and return year after year, often bringing friends and family members. According to Leslie-Ann, “90% of students and 85% of mentors return each year.”



The organization “builds relationships with entire families and keeps track of students until they head off to college.”

Children work with the same mentor during their time in the program which allows them to develop deep relationships. Meredith Hammons, Affiliate Director of St. Jude (Marietta) Path To Shine, describes the mentor role as “helping kids follow their dreams, opening their eyes to why it is important to study and do well in school.” Meredith notes that “seeing the children’s eyes light up at Path to Shine is the thing that fuels my soul.” Donna McKee, Path To Shine volunteer, echoes that sentiment: “Seeing the children’s growth, especially seeing students who have been in the program for some time guiding the newbies is what motivates me.”

Sadly, as a result of the coronavirus, Path To Shine mentoring currently takes place online. Mentors do their best to connect with the students with calls, storytimes, and care packages.

Path To Shine supports families suffering as a result of COVID-19 as well. The organization has distributed \$40,000 of grocery store gift cards. Additionally, they have purchased Chromebooks for students who lacked a way to connect to school online.

Current Needs:

- Books
- Gift Cards
- Financial Donations

Website: <http://pathtoshine.org>

[1]

<https://www.atlantamagazine.com/news-culture-articles/sprawl-racism-bad-education-contribute-to-low-upward-mobility-in-atlanta/>

[2] [http://www.nccp.org/profiles/state\\_profile.php?state=GA&id=7](http://www.nccp.org/profiles/state_profile.php?state=GA&id=7)



Mary-Kathryn Boler, CFRE (she/her) is a past Board Chair for the ECF Board of Directors and is a member of St. Peter and St. Paul Episcopal Church in Marietta. She has 30 years' experience in education and economic development program creation and funding. She also shares her development expertise with other nonprofits as a grant writing instructor at the Georgia Center for Nonprofits. [Learn more about the ECF Board of Directors.](#)

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