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To: [Shelly L Armstrong](#); [Archive](#)
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Included below is a press release regarding Nichole Wheelock of Traverse City, a student at Ferris State University who spends time giving back to the Big Rapids community – her home away from home – through volunteer work. Further information is available by contacting Leah Nixon, assistant director of News Services.

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Ferris students give back to community through volunteer efforts

BIG RAPIDS – Nichole Wheelock has never been afraid to listen to her heart; and her heart has always been in volunteer work. Even though the 22-year-old Ferris State University senior majoring in Social Work is living in Big Rapids – her home away from home – it hasn't stopped her from putting down roots in the volunteer community.

To help make Mecosta County feel more like home, Wheelock of Traverse City maximized her college experience at Ferris by taking on leadership roles in numerous volunteer efforts on campus and in the Big Rapids community. Thanks to the leadership of Wheelock, fellow co-chair David Stevens and scores of other students, the University managed to raise more than \$56,000 for the Mecosta-Osceola United Way Campaign.

“Volunteering is something I live for, and I look at myself as having a heart for service and being a person who believes in the value of helping others,” said Wheelock, part of a group of students, faculty and staff that have helped push the Mecosta-Osceola campaign beyond its original goal of raising \$440,000. “Community service and just volunteering in general are things I’ve been passionate about.”

Achieving the established goal, even though the campaign and the job are hardly finished, has become a symbol of achievement, leadership and hard work at Ferris.

“I’m proud of our colleagues and our students for playing such a pivotal role in pushing us past our goal year after year,” said Jeremy Mishler, Ferris’ director of Alumni Relations and president of the Mecosta-Osceola County United Way Board of Directors.

During the campus-centered campaign, students alone raised more than \$5,000, surpassing their initial goal of \$3,500, Mishler said. Even as the student volunteers wrapped up the successful campus campaign, the effort continued as Ferris’ Office of Student Leadership and Activities continued to sell United Way wristbands to not only raise funds but also to increase awareness and visibility for the campaign.

“The neat thing about the efforts of these students is that there is no doubt they are learning the values of hard work, leadership and volunteerism that is helping them now and will

continue to help them in their private lives,” said Dan Burcham, vice president for Student Affairs at Ferris. “They are learning the kinds of values that will help them to be solid and productive citizens on this campus and when they leave this campus and move into new communities.

“This campaign proves that there is as much learning that goes on outside of the classroom as what takes place in the classroom, and our students are learning that through volunteer efforts like this,” he added.

Linda Telfer, executive secretary to Burcham, echoed his sentiments. “Ferris has participated in the United Way campaign for many, many years,” she said. “This is a campus-wide effort with many people involved that care about the people in our community and who want to make it a better place to live.”

Big Rapids serves as a home away from home for many students like Wheelock who are eager to make the community a better place to study, work and live.

“It means a lot to put on United Way events and to see so many students supporting the effort,” said Wheelock, who also has volunteered for Take Back the Night, Relay for Life, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Make-a-Wish Foundation and more during her time at Ferris. “As Ferris students, we’re part of the Big Rapids community, and even though this may not be our original home, it is our home while we’re here, and we want to take care of it and be a part of this community.”

- 30 -

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