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## COMMUNITY POOLS MINDS, MONEY TO HONOR TEACHERS

**WHITEHEAD MANOR EVENT WILL CELEBRATE THOMASBORO FACULTY**  
by KIRSTEN VALLE, KVALLE@CHARLOTTEOBSERVER.COM

Parents and businesses are working together to honor teachers and staff at a struggling elementary school.

**Whitehead Manor**, a Victorian-style home near Sardis and Providence roads that's now a spot for business retreats and events, is hosting a party June 2 to celebrate 75 employees at Thomasboro Elementary. The event, called "Celebrating Commitment and Caring: Thomasboro Elementary," features outdoor dining, a brass band, a reading by a local poet and gift baskets for the guests of honor.

"It's just a school that has, a lot of times, been swept under the rug," said Kathy Capps of Matthews, a volunteer at Thomasboro who helped come up with the idea. " This is all about appreciation and support for teachers who do not get thanked often enough."

It all started a few years ago, when Capps and other parents at Elizabeth Lane Elementary in Matthews, a school with too many volunteers, decided to volunteer at Thomasboro in northwest Charlotte, where 94 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunches.

They brought cookies for pupils and got other groups involved, including Mint Hill's St. Luke's Catholic Church. And they discovered dedicated teachers, like the one who arrives early to teach step classes for her kids.

"We realized that these teachers really don't get a lot of pats on the back," Capps said.

A few months ago, Capps saw an article in the paper about **Whitehead Manor** and e-mailed Mike **Whitehead** of **Whitehead** Associates, a leadership consulting firm, about doing something there for Thomasboro's teachers.

**Whitehead** agreed to sponsor a workshop, and then decided the teachers and staffers deserved something bigger.

In recent weeks, **Whitehead** Associates and other local businesses, including longtime Thomasboro sponsor Evergreen Investments, have raised more than \$15,000 for the celebration.

"It's a great model for what could happen if everybody had a sister school," said Susanne Deitzel, community liaison for **Whitehead** Associates. "It's a demonstration that it works."

She hopes the party inspires partnerships between schools and businesses all over Charlotte.

"I hope it's a message of can-do and hope, and I hope it wakes people up," Deitzel said. "There's a lot of apathy out there, and more than anything, that's the biggest enemy out there now."

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Reach Kirsten Valle at 704-358-6043.



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