Nicole Filipi ’19 with two of her buddies

Kenny Mogauro ’18 with his buddy

Laura Pinkney ’20 and her buddy
I loved volunteering in Allendale Columbia’s kindergarten classroom, but I knew there was a lot of need in the city schools too; I was looking for a way to get involved with them. I stumbled across the organization Give Back, Give Books, which collects books to build school libraries or to give to city school students to take home. I reached out to them about collecting books to donate and was put in contact with a kindergarten teacher at School #25 to see what kinds of books her students wanted and needed. The conversation evolved to her inviting us to read the books with her students, and with the help of AC faculty member Diane Broberg and Allendale Columbia’s leadership, our first visit to the kindergarten classroom at School #25 became a reality.

The first time we visited, we read books with the kindergarteners and brought short readers for them to take home. As this relationship evolved and our visits expanded to include projects like arts and crafts, we realized we could do more for these kids. We decided to donate the coats we had been annually collecting to students at this school. Following that, we started our first “Can the Principal” drive to donate kid-friendly food boxes to families before the summer, since over 90% of School #25 students qualify and rely on free and reduced price school meals. The partnership has now expanded beyond what I could have imagined after our first trip, and I love hearing about it whenever I visit AC!

Today, AC students visit School #25 several times a year to do activities with them, read with them, and share coats and food collected annually by current students in the Community Service Club.