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MEJO 332  
Nov. 18, 2024

## PROFILE

### Kristina Isaac Empowers Families and Students Through Service and Leadership

Kristina Isaac knows firsthand the impact Note in the Pocket has on families. She grew up in a single-parent home with five siblings in Los Angeles, California. She never faced the prospect of being without clothing, but only because her mom worked three jobs. As a result, her mother was not at home very much. Isaac, who now works for the Raleigh-based nonprofit Note in the Pocket, knows that her impact on the community provides relief for mothers like her mom and families like the one she grew up in.

Isaac's path to Note in the Pocket started in an unlikely way. Her career began doing government contracts as an IT security personnel for the Postal Service. After 9/11, the government laid off a lot of contractors, and Isaac switched her profession to real estate. She ran her own firm, which allowed her to spend time with her children. As her boys got older, she found herself in the corporate sector as a business analyst for a pharmaceutical company. She eventually worked her way up into a role as a chief of staff, where she got her first taste of community service in the workforce. In this role, she realized that students in the Durham area did not have an opportunity to see the plethora of jobs offered in the pharmaceutical industry.

She partnered with Durham Public Schools to bring in high school juniors and seniors for shadowing and, sometimes, summer internships. This partnership idea was successful and later expanded to include HBCUs. Isaac recognized that she found joy in getting the wheels turning on these young adults' career aspirations.

“I just got a strong passion for working with the community and building up the community and filling a gap that needed to be filled,” Isaac said.

After Isaac's children graduated from college, she decided she wanted to act on her passion for community service. In 2022, she left the pharmaceutical industry to start a nonprofit. After a short time, she realized she wanted to work for a separate nonprofit and came across Note in the Pocket on Facebook. Shortly after being hired, Isaac worked with the organization to cultivate her role using her strengths, passions and experiences.

As the new Community Relations Coordinator, she started to oversee a leadership program that shows ninth-12<sup>th</sup> graders how to run a nonprofit and operate a fundraiser and clothing drive. She also got in contact with the UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media for a Fall 2024 semester-long service-learning project where students undertook projects that practiced research, graphic design, copywriting and leadership skills.



While Isaac is passionate about working with high school and college students, she is also grateful for the special moments she experiences with families impacted by Note in the Pocket's work. Team members at the organization rarely interact with families to protect their privacy. However, other organizations often invite Note in the Pocket to participate in pop-up drives that provide hygiene products, food and clothing to those in need. At these pop-ups, Isaac and her co-workers can interact with families in need.

The first of these events that she participated in had a measurable impact on her. It almost brought tears to her eyes. She watched as families picked out as many clothes as needed, free of charge. She saw the smiles that were brought to their faces and the weight lifted off their chests.

For her, this experience and working for Note in the Pocket was a culmination of her life's work. She felt at home, doing the thing she loved: helping others.

“I always go back to my mom with five kids. If my mom had a source where she knew that she could go every month and go and pick out really nice clothes for her five children, that could have given her a little bit more time with us.”



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