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I-77 Mobility Partners hits \$500,000 for community projects in Charlotte



At a I-77 Mobility Partner's collaborative "Fill Her Shoes" event with the Dottie Rose Foundation, girls augmented pairs of shoes with STEM technology.

By I-77 Mobility Partners
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How do you interest fifth-grade girls in STEM education? One way is to introduce them to Charlotte City Council member Marjorie Molina and seven other successful women, who asked, "Who will fill our shoes when we retire?"

That was the basis of I-77 Mobility Partner's collaborative "Fill Her Shoes" event with the Dottie Rose Foundation in which girls augmented pairs of shoes with STEM technology, such as electronics and LED lighting.

"One of our core principals is the promotion of STEM education," said David Garcia, CEO of I-77 Mobility Partners, which designed, built and manages I-77 Express. "America needs more engineers, architects, doctors, scientists; especially females. That's why we were so pleased to donate \$15,000 to the Dottie Rose Foundation and support its terrific mission of teaching STEM education to girls in Title 1 schools."

Becoming a good corporate citizen

A first of its kind for North Carolina, I-77 Express is a public-private partnership between the North Carolina Department of Transportation and I-77 Mobility Partners that developed an innovative solution to a critical transportation corridor that was often plagued by congestion. After responding to a competitive state-led procurement process, I-77 Mobility Partners secured more than \$500 million in private equity – money that did not come from taxpayers' pockets – allowing the NCDOT to make major improvements to 26.2 miles of I-77 roughly 20 years of ahead of schedule.

Since partnering with the NCDOT, I 77 Mobility Partners has aimed to become an engaged corporate citizen for the Charlotte region. In addition to "Fill Her Shoes," the company has funded an aquaponics lab at Walter G. Byers School, a STEM partnership with North Mecklenburg High School, internship opportunities for UNC Charlotte students, the Discovery Place Education Studio, regional food banks and housing support during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic and many other initiatives.

Reaching a milestone

This November, the company reached a milestone by surpassing more than \$500,000 in donations to area nonprofits and schools when it held its second annual “Applause for a Cause,” a hugely popular event in which musicians help nonprofits win a share of a \$50,000 purse.

“It was an honor to win \$10,000 last year at the 2022 Applause for a Cause event,” said Bonnie Battalia, development director at FeedNC in Mooresville. “The gift was used to support programs including FeedNC’s Grassroots Grocery, which serves over 4,200 neighbors and provides food assistance to families in the community who are struggling financially.”

But I-77 Mobility Partners isn’t just writing checks. The company and its employees are constantly striving to enhance the lives of their neighbors. In 2021, I-77 Mobility Partners installed public art on a noise wall in the historically Black neighborhood of Genesis Park. Last year, employees dressed as Santa and his elves to deliver \$15,000 worth of toys to sick children at the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Charlotte. And when neighbors around the Lasalle Street area asked I-77 Mobility Partners to upgrade the landscaping at the entrance and exit ramps near their neighborhood, the company committed \$50,000 and hundreds of manhours to the more than two-year effort.

“The Charlotte region is where our roughly 70 employees live, work and play,” said Garcia. “Whether it’s teaching the next generation of engineers or feeding the hungry, I-77 Mobility Partners is 100% committed to improving the area we are proud to call home.”

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