

**O**n a July morning, eager elementary school students investigated water samples with tweezers at Hidden Valley Ecological Garden in search of macro invertebrates. They had just learned from Tony Roux, a Senior Environment Specialist for Mecklenburg County, that a higher insect population was a sign of a healthy creek. And they were about to learn how to contribute to the health of Little Sugar Creek: by building a floating wetland to leech out possible toxins and improve water quality.

From Hidden Valley and other field trip destinations to Spirit Square studios, about 80 summer campers were hands-on and hard at work throughout the summer with the Arts & Science Council's Digital & Media Literacy Camp. The program, which sparks critical and creative thinking over three two-week sessions, is open to students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade each summer. The separate sessions focused on Digital Storytelling, Digital Storytelling with Multimedia Art and Graphic Design, and Environmental Arts. "We are using art to communicate messages," said Rob Felker, a camp teacher.

One big project for the Environmental Arts session was the construction of oceans in boxes, with students adding details as they



Summer camp students at Spirit Square

learned about coral reefs, animals, rainforest canopies and beyond. They integrated aesthetic details as well as information about the replicated environment. As for acquiring inspiration and knowledge outside the classroom, teacher Libby Withrow said, "You learn more out of books than you do in books."

This is one of the many ways ASC provides quality cultural experiences that educates, entertains and enriches the lives of residents and visitors to the area. As Charlotte and Mecklenburg County's chief advocate for the arts, science, history and heritage, ASC has been active in advancing the cultural sector—all year round—since 1958.

## Ways ASC advances the cultural sector:

### Education:

"Education is an essential component of what we do because we believe the arts, science and history are instrumental to the development of our children and communities," said ASC President Robert Bush. In addition to the Digital & Media Literacy Camp, ASC supports a School Grants program that provides public, private and independent schools in the county resources to access cultural experiences that align with their curriculum. Studio 345, an out-of-school program, educates high school students about digital photography and multimedia arts.

Education doesn't stop with children—ASC's North Carolina Wolf Trap program provides teaching artists for Bright Beginnings classes and More-at-Four classes to boost student learning through drama, music and dance, while offering professional development for teachers. "From elementary to high school and beyond," Bush said, "we want students to have the opportunity to connect to the arts, science and history at every level of their education."

### Performing & visual art:

Let the arts season commence! Come September, Christopher Warren-Green, Music

year all have missions rooted in a devotion to arts, science, heritage or history.

### Public art:

Perhaps you have noticed the violet illumination of the installment under the I-77/West Trade underpass titled *Passing Through Light* by Erwin Redl, the sculpture *Ascendus* by Ed Carpenter at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport, or the installment *Cooperation* by Vivienne Collins at CMPD Eastway. All are commissioned works of public art, a program ASC has managed for Charlotte and Mecklenburg County since 1995. The program operates by way of the Public Art Master Plan, which outlines objectives, ambitions and execution strategies to expand the reach and quality of public artwork. The plan includes recommendations and five-year funding projections, as well as a public art ordinance and guidelines for Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

### Cultural Planning

ASC has aimed to develop and stretch our diverse cultural community for 25 years through cultural planning. The process pinpoints the arts and cultural needs of

# Arts & Science Council: A spirit for advancing the arts

Written by Katie Toussaint | Photos by Arts & Science Council and Dianna Augustine

Director of Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, will once again raise his arms under the Belk Theater's stage lights to conduct the ensemble in Beethoven's *Eroica*, with Gary Hoffman on cello. October will open the same stage to the story of the King of Babylon through Opera Carolina's production of Verdi's *Nabucco*. And November will present the last chance to view *Arctic Utopia* by artist Marek Ranis at McColl Center for Art + Innovation. These institutions, as well as more than 150 others, are considered by the ASC to be Cultural Partners. While all ASC Cultural Partners receive support for specific cultural programming, the 22 organizations that received unrestricted operating support this

community members, suggests strategies for fulfilling those needs, and analyzes resources and possibilities for development. The aforementioned Public Art Master Plan falls into this planning category, as does the Cultural Facilities Master Plan—a 25-year vision for cultural facility development in Mecklenburg County, established in partnership with Charlotte Center City Partners and Foundation For The Carolinas—and the Theatre Task Force—which proposes investment strategies for theater with the intention of improving theater offerings and infrastructure. ASC has also assisted surrounding towns in creating their own cultural action plans.