



EVERYDAY, WE ARE LIVING A STORY,
BUT NOT JUST ANY STORY...OUR STORY.

We are caregivers, teachers, counselors and mentors. We push ourselves to be better and to try new things. We bring others along with us because the people we love and the community we serve are at the very heart of who we are. We are people of faith, vision and great character.

But this story isn't just ours, it's yours.



A STORY OF WORTH

ELEANOR POWERS

Eleanor Powers knows firsthand how substance abuse devastates a family. Growing up, all of the male influences in her life were addicted in one form or another. The struggles of her family motivated her and she was the first person in her family to go to college. Eleanor believes some people have the capacity to rise above the situations they were born into and thanks God she was one of those people.

With a Masters Degree in Counseling, Eleanor works for the Department of Human Resources counseling families, specifically with biological families attempting to reunify with their children who are in foster care. For over 20 years, she has been seeing the effects of generational poverty playing out in her clients and their families.

We constantly hear that the drug problem in Walker County is extensive—especially in the area of opiate abuse and dependence. To combat this epidemic, Eleanor works with clients through Drug Court to change their way of thinking by teaching coping skills, and decision / choice making. She helps them believe they are worthy of a better lifestyle. “Most addicts have been through childhood trauma through which their self-esteem has been eroded. If they don’t believe they deserve a better life, they will never change,” she says.

80% of females in Walker County’s drug court have childhood trauma—in the form of sexual, physical abuse or witnessing domestic violence.

Eleanor lights up when asked to explain the best part of her job. “To see a young lady whose children were removed go through Drug Court and then move into a home, regain custody of children, become productive and be the mother she is meant to be ... it makes me believe God is still in the miracle making business. I see people who are so broken, and with God’s help we are helping put the pieces back together,” She sees this as a part of her ministry, helping to heal the broken of our society. “I meet them where they are,” Eleanor says. “I tell them, I’m not here for you to like or not like me. I’m here to help you to save your life, and I’m going to love you until you are able to love yourself.”



A STORY OF EXPERIENCE

MIKE McCLENDON

Mike McClendon's story includes almost 50 years in IT experience as a programmer and through several different management capacities at Drummond Company, Inc. Retirement has found him managing a different kind of IT program—the food pantry at St. Mary's Episcopal Church. The pantry sees people who have lost their jobs; senior citizens on fixed incomes with children and grandchildren in their homes; and young, single parents struggling to feed their children. The common thread is that they have to make difficult choices every day in order to survive, and providing food—even in limited quantities—is a huge impact on their lives.

Through funding from the Walker Area Community Foundation and other sources, St. Mary's distributed over 6,400 bags of groceries to approximately 4,500 families representing more than 11,600 people in 2018.

"Regardless of the positions I held, programming was always my favorite job. When I started working at the food pantry, all the record keeping was performed manually. The business processes however, were very structured, well-defined and simple. From a programmer's point of view, they were perfect examples of things that could easily be automated. I converted a manual process to an automated system that performed the functions and simplified the process.

Mike has freely shared his software with three or four other food pantries, and at least two of them are currently running versions of it. Each food pantry operates differently, so they have adapted their practices to the software where necessary.

"Personally, I have never been a volunteer and I am the least likely person to ever become involved in an enterprise such as St. Mary's food pantry. It has been a life-changing experience for me. It has opened my eyes not just to the need for food, but to the need to provide so many types of help. I register most of the new people who come to the food pantry, and I talk to them about their situations. It has been a blessing to me and a truly humbling experience."



A STORY OF OPPORTUNITY

RACHEL PUCKETT

When Rachel Puckett arrived in Walker County in 2012, she thought her life story would be to graduate from college and apply for law school. Life, as it's prone to do, threw her a curveball. The University of Alabama's new college, the David Mathews Center for Civic Life and the Walker Area Community Foundation, are partners in an internship that allowed Rachel to spend eight weeks in Walker County learning about the daily workings of a nonprofit organization and how to organize community events. She met with community leaders began to understand the foundations of public health, and her plan for law school began to change.

After witnessing the energy at work in Walker County, Rachel decided what she really wanted to do was to go to work in the community. She reflects, "Working and interning with the Foundation was a formative experience. Because of my time in Walker County, I learned two important lessons: 1.) communities possess the knowledge and skills to effect change and 2.) communities are vast and powerful networks."

Fatal overdoses have increased in Walker County over the last 10 years, far surpassing any other county in Alabama at an annual rate of 47.5 drug deaths per 100,000 residents.

After graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, Rachel is now at work in Walker County. She manages Capstone Rural Health Center's Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) Planning Grant. This grant supports a one-year planning process to integrate mental health and substance abuse services into existing healthcare sites and community organizations. Once the plan is complete, Capstone may apply for an implementation grant that will establish an accessible, affordable prevention, treatment and recovery network for Walker County.

Throughout her career, Rachel has already had the opportunity to lead and work on initiatives centered on financial literacy, access to healthcare, education, violence against women, and substance abuse and mental health in the criminal justice system.

Rachel's story is just beginning. We can't wait to see where it takes her ... and us.



A STORY OF VISION

JAMIE MASSEY

Jamie Massey has a big dream for Walker County. She wears many community hats, including being co-pastor at Sumiton Church of God with her husband, Victor. The Masseys recently purchased the old T. S. Boyd Elementary School to create the City of Lights Dream Center, which exists to empower our community into a brighter future by eliminating the darkness of poverty and addiction in Walker County.

There are many chapters to the Dream Center's vision, including educational programs that address poverty issues, free daycare services for women in the rehab program, an after-school program free to children on free or reduced lunches, addiction recovery classes, as well as a drug/alcohol treatment facility. They believe through proper education and development they can address the mindset that has led to poverty and addiction in Walker County. Through the process they will teach future generations how they can be a part of the solution and to dream for a healthier, brighter future.

Because of a grant from the Walker Area Community Foundation, City of Lights was able to purchase two vans, which enable them to pick children up from school and take them home in the evenings.

Presently, the Dream Center has 45 children enrolled in their after-school program. They pick them up after school and transport them to City of Lights where they receive a hot meal, tutoring, life-skill classes, creative arts classes and physical education. They are transported home in the afternoons and given a snack to eat in the evenings before bed. Through this approach, they are meeting the needs of hunger with the children in their program.

"Our relationship with Walker Area Community Foundation has been a very beneficial part of our success," Jamie says. "They have been a tremendous resource in connecting us with other organizations that we have been able to partner with for meals, snacks, educational resources, supplies and volunteers. Together as a community, we are seeing the tide turn. City of Lights is thankful for the Walker Area Community Foundation and their support!"



A STORY OF HERITAGE

MONISHA MOORE

Born and raised in Oakman, Alabama, Monisha Moore has roots in Walker County. After graduating from Oakman High School, her educational pursuits led her from Birmingham-Southern College to UAB, and then the University of West Alabama. Currently, she is a doctoral candidate in the Educational Studies in Diverse Populations program at UAB.

She began her career as a kindergarten teacher at Oakman Elementary School before moving to Memorial Park Elementary. After eleven years teaching kindergarten, she transitioned to her current assignment teaching third grade. Every year, Monisha brings her students to the Bankhead House and Heritage Center (BHHC), which is owned and operated by Walker Area Community Foundation.

In 2018, 1,197 students visited the Bankhead House and Heritage Center on school tours.

"I enjoy taking field trips to the Bankhead House as much as the scholars I teach, Monisha says. "Although the Bankhead House provides transportation for students who attend school in the Walker County area, we are very fortunate in that we are located close enough to walk. Through interactive visits to the BHHC, students are able to experience hands-on learning opportunities that are developmentally appropriate. The beauty of the learning there is that everyone can learn something. My scholars do not need to be fluent readers to learn there; they just need a willingness to explore."

Students from all over Walker County have been able to investigate several exhibits in recent years. For Monisha, the exhibits that really capture her attention are those that her students connect with strongly. For example, when they visited the Black History exhibit, several students realized that their relatives or neighbors had memorabilia featured. The connection and sustained engagement were clear. Their excitement and their pride were evident through the rich dialogue both during and after the visit. During the wildlife exhibit, students were able to explore animals in a very intimate and meaningful way. This in-depth exploration allowed them to better understand the true magnitude of the creatures many of them had previously only experienced through books or posters. "It came to life for them," she says. "We are quite fortunate to have this treasure as a community partner in Jasper City Schools."



A STORY OF HOPE

GREG ELLIS

Any given Sunday afternoon, the parking lot at Jasper's First Baptist Church fills with people chatting and sharing their stories as they walk in the door to Celebrate Recovery. Together, they have formed a community that celebrates the recovery of others; easing their hurts, destroying their habits and leaving behind the things that "hang-up" their path to success. Celebrate Recovery identifies that people are broken due to sin in a fallen world and through faith in God learn how to deal with life.

Having seen some of the other support group programs through his work with the Walker County Drug Court, Court Referral and with criminals in general, Greg Ellis believes in the Celebrate Recovery model and leads the service each week. With other programs, steps and meetings end, but with the Celebrate Recovery approach, if clients develop a relationship with God, it is one they carry with them for the remainder of their life and will not end once they are no longer using drugs, engaging in improper sex, gambling, shopping, etc.

Over the last five years, more than 1,250 people have been through the Celebrate Recovery program at Jasper's First Baptist Church.

"Without the support of Walker Area Community Foundation's Barbara Drummond Thorne Fund and Jasper's First Baptist Church, we would have had to fight for pennies to be able to purchase materials and a place to meet," says Greg. "Through this single program, you can see how the Foundation makes it possible for loving and caring groups to give to those in our community when they otherwise would be required to exhaust themselves on the front end through funding efforts instead of the actual helping of our neighbors."

Greg believes Jasper can be the next Fairhope, Daphne, Calera or Cullman, but only if we all work toward the same goals and share a love for all of our neighbors, not just the loveable, but the unlovable and forgotten men and women, too. "The Foundation will be just as instrumental in this as anyone, and all of it will begin by changing the lives of those who we overlook, ignore and have already decided are too far gone to help."



A STORY OF HUNGER

LENEDA JONES

Every weekend in Walker County, the bedtime story of many children includes hunger, as many of them have little or no food to eat at home. Backyard Blessings is a community-based organization that seeks to meet the needs of hungry children in Walker County by providing food for the weekend through a backpack food program. Leneda Jones, executive director of the organization, and her team of volunteers, teachers and school administrators work together to make this happen.

Last school year Backyard Blessings packed and distributed 26,444 bags of food to children in Walker County.

Leneda shares, "The financial support the Walker Area Community Foundation gives to us has a huge impact on our organization's ability to carry out our mission and offers us the opportunity to reach more children." Backyard Blessings has a five-year goal to serve every school in Walker County that does not have this type of food assistance. They believe there is no reason that students in any of our schools should go without enough food and intend to make that a reality.

Leneda says that Walker Area Community Foundation plays an ongoing role in their story. "The training and wealth of nonprofit knowledge that we receive from them is invaluable to us. Whenever we need help and advice, they are always there to point us in the right direction. The Foundation goes above and beyond to provide resources and training for our local nonprofits; all we need to do is take advantage of what they offer. Everything they do is done with a standard of excellence."

"They have truly been a game-changer for Backyard Blessings and, because of their support over the years, the lives of thousands of students have been impacted right here in our own backyard," Leneda says. "They have a big vision of a better Walker County, and they also have a vision and compassion to see hungry children have food for the weekend. We can see a day when people talk about Walker County; they will talk about positive changes and innovative ways to improve the lives of our families. Backyard Blessings wants to be a part of that!"



A STORY OF KINDNESS

JOE AND ANNETTE KELLEY FUND

Joette Kelley Brown and Alicia Kelley Stewart believe that being kind and serving others is a way of life. That's what their parents, Joe and Anette Kelley, taught them. Alicia says, "They have been so instrumental in my life by showing how much a kind word or gesture can change someone's day or even their life. I am so proud to be their daughter and want to carry on what they have taught me, and that's to put others before myself."

Joette and Alicia recently started a Donor Advised Fund at the Walker Area Community Foundation in honor of their parents. "Joette and I decided we wanted to be able to give back to the community that takes care of us in honor of mom and dad," says Alicia. The sisters believe the impact the Walker Area Community Foundation has on this community through improvements to nonprofits, helping individuals, investing in our youth, and the health and wellness of others is vast.

Walker Area Community Foundation directly improved the quality of life for more than 20,000 people in 2018.

"The Foundation has an amazing ability to gather the right people together at the right time, all while having a vision for the future for generations to come. That is exactly why we chose this Foundation to honor our parents, who were the first to teach us the importance of giving back and helping others. We couldn't think of a better way to honor our parents than starting this fund with the Walker Area Community Foundation," says Joette.

The sisters can remember giving blankets to the homeless during one of their annual father/daughter Christmas outings. Alicia can distinctively remember the look on one man's face—gratitude. "When I moved back to Jasper, people would stop me and tell me stories of how my parents helped them through hard times by prayers, just a hug or even financially. It always embarrassed me when my mom would basically run strangers down to tell them how beautiful they were or that their scarf was beautiful. Those small gestures make people's day, and you could see it change their mood. Now I am proud when she does it," Alicia says.

Kindness sure goes along way.

BY THE NUMBERS

\$20,429,903

Total amount of grants directly invested in our community since inception

\$2,055,904

Total amount of grant distributions in 2018

\$66,352,747

Total amount of assets held

180

Number of grants made to nonprofit organizations in 2018

45,000

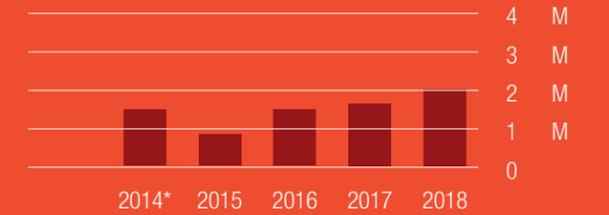
Number of people whose quality of life has improved because of a grant in 2018

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

GRANT GROWTH OVER TIME

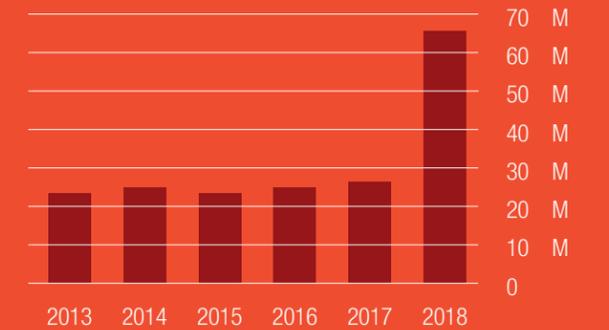
Total Grants Awarded: \$20,429,903

2014	1,288,044
2015	1,015,748
2016	1,245,495
2017	1,393,391
2018	2,055,904



ASSET GROWTH OVER TIME

2013	23,976,770
2014	24,053,247
2015	23,650,638
2016	24,066,137
2017	26,844,697
2018	66,352,747



BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS (as of December 31, 2018)

Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,275,302
Investments	63,610,577
Other Assets	6,475
Property & Equipment, net	1,437,208
TOTAL ASSETS	66,352,747

LIABILITIES 1,318

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	66,264,853
Temporarily Restricted	86,576

TOTAL NET ASSETS 66,351,429

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS 66,352,747

*Returns are calculated net of fees



2018 CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Donors and Friends,

Every great story has a hero, and every hero has a guiding light that helps them along the way. The nonprofit organizations of Walker County are our hero. The work they accomplish daily makes life better for the clients they serve, including hungry people being fed; children in need being supported by adults who care about their future; volunteers spreading love while meeting the needs of others; addictions being conquered because of planning, counseling and faith in God; and Walker County's great heritage being showcased in a facility that is rich with love for our community.

The Walker Area Community Foundation is proud of the nonprofits in our community. We celebrate their successes, and when problems arise, we work to light their path with solutions and advice. We annually offer the Nonprofit Training Academy, a full day of training sessions featuring speakers from across Alabama who are experts in their fields. Session topics include board responsibilities, donor development, volunteer retention, financial management, and so on. It is important to this Foundation that our nonprofits have every tool they need to succeed.

The year 2018 was a year of growth for the Foundation. Through your gifts, we can now encourage nonprofits to not only apply for what they need to get by, but to dream big and apply for what they need to expand and grow. Your investment in this Foundation is creating a story of community change, legacy and lasting impact. We are a collection of people working behind the scenes to make the best stories come to life. This story is our story, *together*.

Beth Thorne Stukes



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