

*The margin of excellence*





"The Foundation provides a little **MARGIN OF EXCELLENCE** for the community and upgrades the quality of life through things that can not be funded the normal way."

Quote courtesy of *The Daily Mountain Eagle*:  
John T. Oliver, Jr. *Founding Board Member of the Walker Area Community Foundation*

## WHAT IS A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?

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A community foundation is a public charity focused on a geographical area, pooling donations which support local nonprofits and empowers community change. Community foundations receive financial gifts from a multitude of sources including: individuals, families, businesses, and government or foundation grants. Community Foundations never give away their corpus. Instead, they wisely invest these gifts and give away a majority of the interest earned each year, creating a savings account for the future.

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### WALKER AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Walker Area Community Foundation was established in 1995 to build the permanent capital needed in our area to daily facilitate community conversations, inspire action, and empower partners. Twice a year, the Foundation awards grants to 501c3 organizations that demonstrate the expertise and experience necessary to accomplish their mission. These grants, along with the Foundation's strategic priorities, offer donors the ability to create real community change with their philanthropic gifts.

### A MARGIN OF EXCELLENCE

Since 1995, we have been helping donors support their community in a smarter way. We help donors explore the different charitable vehicles available and explain how they can make a lasting difference through their giving. Join us, and together, we will continue to create a margin of excellence for the Walker County area.

## WHY SHOULD THE FOUNDATION BE MY PARTNER IN GIVING?

### EXPERIENCED

The Staff of the community foundation understands the changing needs of the community and has a thorough understanding of the nonprofit organizations serving in those areas. The Board of Directors is made up eleven knowledgeable community leaders and volunteers who serve as policymakers and ambassadors for the community.

### RESPONSIBLE

The Foundation is responsible in how it handles the money entrusted to us and how we invest it for both grant making and sustainability.

### GIVING

Since the Foundation's inception, it has grown from \$6 million to more than \$125 million, all the while giving away \$30 million to more than 250 nonprofit organizations throughout Alabama. We have a sophisticated grant review process to ensure we are investing our grant dollars in nonprofits that are making an impact.

### TAX ADVANTAGES

Community foundations are public charities, and donations qualify for the maximum available deduction for charitable contributions in the year in which the gift is made. (Tax credit can be banked over years)

### PERSONALIZED SERVICE AND CUSTOMIZATION

Community foundations will meet with you individually or with your financial advisor to discuss your charitable giving interests and needs.

### RESULTS

There will always be community issues, yet here is our promise to you – there will always be a Walker Area Community Foundation to create initiatives around those issues. We will always be here to empower our citizens to create change while encouraging our nonprofits to dream bigger and funding them to do so. Your gift will last more than a lifetime.

## HOW CAN I GIVE TO THE FOUNDATION?

### GIFTS OF CASH

Donors can now deduct up to 60% of adjusted gross income for contributions of cash. If your cash donations exceed that limit, you can carry forward any unused deductions for five years.

### APPRECIATED STOCK

When you donate stock, you can deduct the full value of the stock at the time you donate it and avoid tax on the appreciated capital gains.

### IRA CHARITABLE ROLLOVER

Individuals 70½ or older may roll over up to \$100,000 from an individual retirement account (IRA) directly to the Foundation without recognizing the assets transferred as income.

### DONOR ADVISED FUND (DAF)

A Donor Advised Fund is set up by a donor and administered by the Foundation. A donor can start a DAF, receive an immediate tax benefit that year, and then provide guidance on distributions from the fund to nonprofits for as long as the fund exists.

### NON-CASH ASSETS

You can also donate other non-cash assets, such as real estate. The charitable deduction will depend on the type of asset and whether it is put into related use.

### THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO GIVE TO THE WALKER AREA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION.

Contact the Foundation or your Financial Planner if you need help choosing the method that is right for you.

### ONLINE GIVING

Venmo: @WalkerArea-CommunityFoundation

For online giving or information about our funds, visit [wacf.org](https://wacf.org)

## BY THE NUMBERS

\$29,666,238

Total amount awarded to nonprofit organizations over the last 27 years

\$94,076,906

Total amount of assets held by the Community Foundation on 12/31/21

\$6,000,000

Amount of original gift, given by Community Health Systems, Inc., to begin the Foundation

3,718

Number of grants made to nonprofit organizations since inception

75,000

Number of people whose quality of life has improved because of the Foundation

## WACF FINANCIAL HISTORY

YEAR	GRANTS AWARDED	GIFTS RECEIVED	TOTAL ASSETS
1995	-	6,000,000	6,000,000
1996	-	75,000	6,439,025
1997	289,300	147,250	7,595,028
1998	295,000	51,869	8,192,311
1999	367,300	100,154	8,542,749
2000	311,106	60,425	8,627,833
2001	294,490	179,278	8,226,235
2002	223,377	211,236	7,410,969
Gift and grant totals from this point forward include both our unrestricted Community Fund as well as our Component Funds.			
2003	330,213	359,556	8,770,491
2004	264,158	358,402	9,902,100
2005	308,211	244,765	10,695,867
2006	489,473	552,806	12,018,241
2007	569,170	432,961	12,164,567
2008	705,627	995,255	9,730,123
2009	465,969	776,138	12,143,056
2010	627,450	887,699	13,361,818
2011	1,190,071	10,701,343	22,328,994
2012	3,626,636	2,507,746	23,366,184
2013	3,073,770	1,187,125	23,976,770
2014	1,288,044	632,233	23,971,032
2015	1,015,748	1,317,305	23,697,848
2016	1,245,495	472,913	24,069,051
2017	1,393,391	1,959,290	26,844,697
2018	2,055,904	43,579,423	66,352,747
2019	3,024,560	424,999	72,387,187
2020	2,373,134	7,906,078	83,301,999
2021	3,838,641	5,907,913	94,076,906
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$29,666,236</b>	<b>\$88,029,162</b>	

## “IT’S EASY TO GIVE AWAY MONEY. IT’S HARD TO GIVE IT AWAY WELL.”

The Foundation awards grants that address the evolving needs of our community. Twice a year, we accept grant proposals from 501(c)(3) organizations. We support organizations that demonstrate the expertise and experience necessary to accomplish their mission. Once awarded a grant, the recipient is required to sign a contract with the Foundation, which communicates that funds from the Foundation may only be used on the objectives listed in the

### ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Alabama Symphony Orchestra  
Bankhead House & Heritage Center  
Birmingham Botanical Gardens  
Birmingham Children’s Theatre  
Birmingham Landmarks, Inc.  
Camp McDowell  
First Presbyterian Church  
Friends of the Alabama Archives  
Friends of Downtown Jasper  
Main Street Alabama  
Public Radio WBHM 90.3 FM  
UAB Department of Theatre  
Walker County Arts Alliance  
Walker County Christian Chorus  
Winston County Arts Council  
Winston County Schools

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH

4th Congressional District Art Competition  
AMBUCS  
Backyard Blessings  
Beacon House  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Big Oak Ranch  
Boy Scouts of America, Black Warrior Council  
Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Alabama  
Camp COOL  
Childcare Resources  
Free Will Baptist Children’s Home  
Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama  
Girls Incorporated of Central Alabama  
Kids Loving Kids / Grace Ministries

Magic Moments  
Maranatha Baptist Church  
National Child Safety Council  
Nick’s Kids Foundation  
Raising Arrows  
Secret Pantry  
Smile-A-Mile  
Walker County Children’s Advocacy Center  
Walker County Children’s Policy Council  
YMCA of Greater Birmingham  
Youth Leadership Walker County

### EDUCATION

Alabama Kiwanis Foundation / Jean Dean RIF  
Alabama Possible  
Auburn University Foundation  
Bevill State Community College  
Carbon Hill High School  
Carl Elliott Regional Library  
Curry High School  
Dora High School  
Jalayah Hackman Foundation  
Jasper City Board of Education  
Jasper High School  
Jasper Junior High School  
Jasper Police Explorers  
John Carroll Catholic High School  
Literacy Council of Central Alabama  
Maddox Intermediate School  
McWane Science Center  
Oakman High School  
Parrish Elementary School  
Preschool Partners

Samford University  
Sumiton Middle School  
T. R. Simmons Elementary School  
University of Alabama New College  
Valley Jr. High School  
Walker College Foundation  
Walker County Board of Education  
Walker County Sheriff’s Office

### ELDER CARE

Alzheimer’s of Central Alabama  
Middle Alabama Area Agency on Aging  
Positive Maturity, Inc.

### ENVIRONMENT

Disney Lake Landing Project  
Walker County Lake  
Wild South

### HEALTH

Alabama Lions Sight  
American Cancer Society, Inc.  
American Heart Association  
Arthritis Foundation  
Boldo Volunteer Fire and Rescue  
Brandi’s Blessings  
Capstone Rural Health Center  
Carbon Hill Fire & Rescue  
Children’s of Alabama  
City of Cordova Fire Department  
Community Grief Support Service  
Empire Volunteer Fire Department  
Glenwood Autism & Behavioral Health Center

recipient’s grant proposal. A written report on the funded project is due in the Foundation’s office nine months after funding is received. The report requires financial data, as well as specific information concerning progress toward the stated objectives of the project. Listed below are the nonprofits who received funding from the Community Fund, as well as our Component Funds, over the last five years.

Healthy Eating Active Living, Inc.  
Impact Alabama  
Kid One Transport System, Inc.  
Muscular Dystrophy Association  
Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center  
Pregnancy Test and Resource Center  
Saragossa Volunteer Fire Department  
Sight Savers America  
St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital  
University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Nursing  
Walker County Health Action Partnership  
YMCA of Montgomery

### RECREATION

Birmingham Zoo, Inc.  
Camp O’Rear  
C.A.S.T. for Kids Foundation  
City of Cordova  
City of Jasper Parks and Recreation  
Indian Creek Youth Camp  
J.H. Ranch  
People First of Walker County  
Sawyer’sville Summer Camp  
Smith Lake Civic Association  
Townley Community Center  
Walker County Commission

### SOCIAL WELFARE

American Red Cross  
Arc of Walker County  
Arley Women’s Club  
Bethel Church Food Bank  
Big Oak Ranch

Boldo Food Pantry  
Bundles of Hope Diaper Bank  
Carbon Hill Women’s Club  
Christian’s Place Mission  
Church of Cahaba Bend  
City of Jasper  
City of Lights Dream Center  
ClasTran  
Community Food Bank of Central Alabama  
Community Foundation of East Alabama  
Community Foundation of SW Louisiana  
Cordova First Baptist Church  
Crosswinds Foundation  
Daily Mountain Eagle Christmas Shoe Fund  
Daybreak  
Dilworth Church of God  
Equines Assisting Special Individuals  
Fellowship House  
First United Methodist Church of Jasper  
FOCUS on Recovery  
Food Bank of East Alabama  
Forgotten Tails  
Full Life Ahead Foundation  
Gordo First Baptist Church  
Greater Birmingham Humane Society  
Habitat for Humanity, Greater Birmingham  
H.A.L.O.  
Hope for Women, LLC  
Hope House Church  
J.A.M.E.S. Ministries  
Jasper Area Family Services Center, Inc.  
Jasper’s First Baptist Church  
Main Street Ministries Inc.

Mission of Hope  
Mt. Vernon Baptist Church Food Bank  
New Prospect Baptist Church  
Pathways Professional Counseling  
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham  
Rescuers United for Furbabies  
Ronald McDonald House  
Rotary Club of Jasper  
Sanctuary Church of God  
Society of St. Andrew  
Southern Research  
St. Cecilia’s Catholic Church  
St. Mary’s Episcopal Church  
Sumiton Church of God Food Bank Ministry  
The Foundry Ministries  
The Salvation Army  
The Wellhouse  
Town of Oakman  
Town of Parrish  
Townley Community Center  
TriCounty Agency for Intellectual Disabilities  
United Counseling  
United Way of Central Alabama, Inc.  
Victims of Violent Crimes Fountain  
Walker County Amateur Radio Emergency Service  
Walker County Coalition for the Homeless  
Walker County Community Action Agency  
Walker County Department of Human Resources  
Walker County Humane Society  
Your Town Alabama  
Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.

# GENERATION WALKER

Generation Walker, a road map for creating a vision for a vibrant future for Walker County, emerged from a yearlong planning process by the Walker Area Community Foundation. We listened to more than 500 citizens across Walker County and were excited to hear of our common love for this beautiful land, the great work already in progress by so many organizations, and the excitement and optimism we share about this time in the life of our community.

The result of this process, Generation Walker, is a plan that identifies four external priorities for the Foundation to focus on over the next three to five years in collaboration with leaders and citizens across the county. Together, we can take advantage of the key opportunities to build for the future.



## CREATE ALIGNMENT AND A COMMON VISION

### GOAL

Provide a framework of support to facilitate the building of strong, unified leadership and development of a countywide common vision.



BRING LOCAL LEADERS TOGETHER



HOLD COMMUNITY MEETINGS FOR INPUT

"We need more community engagement with opportunities for various groups to talk with each other about how to solve problems in Walker County and to celebrate the many strengths in the community."

**INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT**



## STRENGTHEN EDUCATION

### GOAL

Promote quality of life and employment opportunities in Walker County by building stronger educational systems.



PROVIDE STUDENTS AND PARENTS WITH TOOLS FOR SUCCESS



ENCOURAGE EACH CHILD FROM PRE-K TO CAREER

"We have to continue to mentor and educate our youth in order to have successful leaders of tomorrow."

**SURVEY PARTICIPANT**



## SUPPORT NONPROFITS

### GOAL

Support nonprofits in Walker County through Foundation grants and capacity-building initiatives.



HELP COMMUNITY GROUPS INCREASE THEIR CAPACITY



FOCUS GRANT FUNDING ON SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES

"I would like to see more countywide cooperation and collaboration between local city governments, churches, and nonprofits."

**COMMUNITY CONVERSATION PARTICIPANT**



## HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND RECREATION

### GOAL

Health outcome trends for Walker County improve over the next 3-5 years.



CREATE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTHY LIVING



IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR WALKER COUNTY

"My vision is to be a healthier community with people making better lifestyle choices."

**INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT**

## COMPONENT FUNDS

Component funds allow families, individuals, or organizations to focus on the charitable needs of our community and leave the administrative tasks to the Foundation. These funds are a permanent source of community capital, which will help the Foundation to continue its work today and far into the future.

**Alabama Free Will Baptist Children's Home Fund** was formed to help support the needs of the Alabama Free Will Baptist Children's home, which provides a loving home to children who are hurting or struggling with life's challenges.

**Andrew and Samantha Byars Family Fund** was established to help meet the needs of children in our community.

**Anonymous Fund**, started by a Walker County family who wishes to remain anonymous, supports general philanthropy.

**Aubrey Lea Gates Fund** was established in memory of our daughter, Aubrey Lea Gates, to support general philanthropy and quality of life improvements within our local community.

**Bankhead Fund** was started by Walter Will Bankhead and has a long history of providing general philanthropic dollars for our nonprofits.

**Bankhead House & Heritage Center Fund** supports the ongoing operations of the Bankhead House & Heritage Center.

**Barbara Drummond Thorne Fund**, given by her estate, offers financial aid to the organizations that were closest to her heart.

**Big Oak Ranch Fund** was established to support Big Oak Ranch in their efforts to meet the needs of abused, neglected, and abandoned children by giving them a solid, Christian home and a chance to realize and fulfill God's plan in their lives.

**Clyde "Sappo" Black Family Fund** supports the general needs of nonprofit organizations in the community.

**Crump Family Fund** supports the education of children and the efforts of those engaged in emergency response.

**Disaster Relief Fund** focuses on meeting the emergency, unmet needs of Walker County residents who have suffered damage due to natural disasters.

**Don Drummond Family Fund** seeks to meet the needs of the residents of Walker County, as well as the community as a whole.

**Dr. Bobby T. and Betty Hooks Underwood Fund** continues the family's tradition of supporting nonprofit organizations in Walker County.

**Dr. Buddy Larry and Rieta Thorne Fund** was created to support general operations and special projects of Jasper's First Baptist Church.

**Dr. Sawyer Mullen Memorial Fund** was created to honor the memory of Dr. Sawyer Mullen by supporting the charitable needs of our community.

**Drummond Company, Inc. (DCI) Fund** provided aid to employees of Drummond Company who suffered damage because of the April 27, 2011, tornados and continues to provide safe shelter for our community during storms.

**Drummond Thorne Stukes Fund** works to improve quality of life around Alabama while also addressing emerging needs of the community.

**Engel and Mitnick Family Fund** recognizes the importance of the social services being delivered every day to those with mental illness in Walker County and will award grants to support their efforts.

**Excellence in Education Fund** supports the Jasper City School system and its teachers with opportunities not included in the general budget.

**Friends of Camp O'Rear Fund** supports the physical plant and surrounding environs of Camp O'Rear.

**Haleyville Downtown Project Fund** funds downtown projects that will add life to the Haleyville community while creating an economic impact.

**Health Action Partnership** is a working group of Walker County health-related organizations striving to improve the health and lifestyles of our citizens.

**Jackson Family Fund** was founded with the belief that orphans and foster children should be afforded the privilege of attending programs like Camp McDowell. It also provides educational enrichment experiences for children without parents and supports the ministry of the Episcopal Church for the same.

Behind each fund is an abundance of success stories. Each one holds its own purpose and history but gains strength from being managed together. Donations can be made to any fund at any time by anyone.

**Jasper Main Street Fund** supports the operations of Jasper Main Street and the ongoing revitalization of Jasper's downtown district.

**Jasper Recreational Fund** supports the expansion of recreational opportunities and programs, making Jasper's recreational offerings exceptional for Alabama.

**Joe and Annette Kelley Fund**, started by their daughters to give back to the community that has taken care of them, this fund fosters a spirit of kindness and helpfulness through the nonprofit agencies in our community.

**King's Home Fund** was established to meet the needs of King's Home to serve Christ by serving youth, women, and mothers with children who are at risk.

**KUB Philanthropic Fund** supports the needs of nonprofit organizations in and around Walker County, as well as initiatives that improve the quality of life in our communities.

**Larry Drummond Family Fund** supports the needs of nonprofit organizations in and around Walker County, as well as supports initiatives that improve the quality of life in our community.

**Matthew and Ashley Laird Fund** recognizes the important work of nonprofit organizations and supports their operations and programs.

**Nick's Kids Fund** supports the official charity of the Saban Family, Nick's Kids, which provides general support to children, family, teacher, and student causes.

**Onward Fund** fosters efficient, streamlined, service delivery to people in need, moving them forward into financial stability.

**Patrick and Debbie Drummond Fund** supports the needs of nonprofit organizations in and around Walker County, as well as initiatives that improve the quality of life in our communities.

**Phillip Fraley Memorial Fund** was created in memory of Phillip Fraley. It focuses on educating youth through trade programs and technology in schools.

**Pinnacle Bank Fund** supports the general needs of nonprofit organizations serving our area.

**Rebekah L. Black Fund** assists in addressing issues of obtaining and maintaining sobriety, assistance in transition from rehabilitation back to society, job placement and transportation needs, and hopefully achieve the gift of "one more chance" to become productive members of their community again.

**Reed Family Fund** supports general philanthropy while keeping in mind the importance of serving the basic needs of Walker County families.

**Rotary Club of Jasper Fund** is an endowment fund of the Rotary Club of Jasper.

**Samuel Lee Smith Advised Fund** helps children and youth live their lives to the fullest by making grants to encourage strong health, athletics, scouting, religion, and the arts, especially to those who need financial assistance.

**Sherer Family Foundation Fund** supports the aesthetics of our community and the fine arts of the Walker Area, its facilities, grounds, and environs.

**Steve Byars Fund** was created in the memory of Steve Byars, who saw his role in Jasper as that of a steward and gave selflessly to his community. This fund will continue his legacy and support general philanthropy in Walker County.

**Terri Drummond Lyon Fund** supports the needs of nonprofit organizations in and around Walker County, as well as initiatives that improve the quality of life in our communities.

**Victims of Violent Crime Fund** was organized to create awareness of victims of violent crime in Walker County, Alabama, and to permanently memorializes the victims and their families.

**Winston County Fund** serves as a permanent source of community capital for Winston County by funding nonprofit organizations and community projects.

**Wright Family Fund** supports the needs of nonprofit organizations in and around Walker County, as well as initiatives that improve the quality of life in our community.

## HOW WE DECIDE WHO GETS FUNDING

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At the heart of what we do lies a special group of individuals who volunteer their time to ensure that every dollar invested into our community is done so in an effective way. Our Grant Review Team is made up of eleven Walker Countians with diverse interests and expertise who guide the Foundation to a responsible approach to giving with unconventional results.

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RACHAEL P. WINSTON has dedicated time out of her busy schedule to serve on our Grant Review Team since the fall of 2020. One of the benefits of serving on the team is being introduced to our community's outstanding nonprofit organizations. One grant that Rachael reviewed that has impacted her life is Smile-A-Mile. She did the review and when she left, not only did she want them to receive funding, but she also wanted to personally become a part of their team. Rachael loves this organization because it does so much for children battling cancer. "Their common slogan, Hope is Never Cancelled, continues to inspire me for better days ahead in any situation," says Rachael.

Rachael describes her experience of being on our Grant Review Team like being a part of a family. A family that takes pride in the people that it associates with. A family that is warm, inviting, and cares what tomorrow looks like.

*"I have been associated with Walker County since 2017. In that time, I have seen several changes, such as major renovations in Downtown Jasper, which the Community Foundation helped to fund. They also spend a lot of resources to improve our opioid crisis, which is very important for the survival of our population. The Foundation will be around forever and will continue to have a positive impact on Walker/Winston Counties. Everyone wants to be proud of where they live, and the Community Foundation makes this happen."*



RACHAEL P. WINSTONS  
Grant Review Team Member

## HOW WE DECIDE WHO GETS FUNDING

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The Foundation receives over 100 grant requests annually. Because this number is so high, our Team members are assigned multiple grants to thoroughly investigate. These are typically assigned to each team member based on their area of expertise. They schedule site visits and interviews with the applicants then report their findings to the Foundation. Along with their report, they make recommendations as to what level of funding each organization should receive.

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JOSH GATES' involvement with the Foundation cultivated a desire for civic engagement. As he became aware of the needs of our community, he was challenged by the efforts of the Foundation to meet those needs. "Serving as a Grant Reviewer is one of the most rewarding things I do. My perspective shifted from simply noting what was wrong around me to seeing opportunities. One such opportunity zone was Jasper's downtown area. I met with Michael Putman, Executive Director of Jasper Main Street, to review their grant request and was immediately inspired to involve myself with the organization and its mission to revitalize downtown. Today, I am the acting President of Jasper Main Street and more motivated than ever to positively impact and celebrate the vibrancy of our flourishing downtown."

Josh feels like giving to the Foundation makes sense for several reasons.

1. The Foundation's integrity and thoughtful diligence in its stewardship of funds.
2. It offers donors the opportunity to give to a single entity yet impact a vast and diverse group of organizations across our county.
3. Finally, giving to the Foundation is a great way to be engaged and play a critical role within the community we are all so blessed to be a part of.

*"As the Foundation and its footprint continue to grow, I hope more people become aware of it and are motivated, as I am, to include the Foundation in their charitable giving."*



**JOSH GATES**  
Grant Review Team Member

## HOW WE DECIDE WHO GETS FUNDING

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Two of the Foundation's favorite days of the year are Grant Review Days. We are first and foremost a grantmaking organization. There is nothing that excites us more than being able to responsibly invest money back into the organizations that help to make Walker County a better place to live, work, learn, and play.

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MATTHEW LAIRD has been involved with the Foundation for 5 years now. Before he and Ashley started a fund, Matthew was on our Grant Review Team. "A grant reviewer carries a high-level responsibility to be a good steward of the communities' resources. It is rewarding to be able to invest time in research and interview non-profits to make thoughtful educated recommendations to the Foundation and its funders."

Grant Review Day is the day when we access and address the pressing needs in our community and see firsthand how those needs are met.

There are many easy ways to get involved with the Community Foundation—Memorial or Honorary Gifts, Community Fund donations, establishing a Donor Advised Fund, or including the WACF in your estate plan. To learn more about getting involved, visit us at [wacf.org](http://wacf.org)

*"The needs of our community are greater than any one person, so we need to work together to make a meaningful impact for many years to come and serve as the model for other funders and communities."*



**MATTHEW LAIRD**  
Grant Review Trainer

## HISTORY AND MILESTONES

In 1995, following a suggestion from John T. Oliver, Jr., Pat Willingham and the Community Health Systems Board set aside \$6 million in proceeds from the sale of the Walker Regional Medical Center to begin an endowment for the Walker Area Community Foundation. This donation has served as the nucleus for funding worthy causes that might otherwise go lacking.

Other community leaders involved in the formation of the Foundation were the late J. George Mitnick and Larry Drummond. Together, Oliver, Willingham, Mitnick, and Drummond created a foundation that will forever serve as a resource for solutions to our community's greatest problems.

Since 1995, the Foundation's endowment has grown not only from the original \$6 million to more than \$94 million due to wise investments and the creation of new Donor Advised Funds, but mostly because of the faithfulness of our donors.

The first two years were a time of growth for the endowment. In 1997, the first seven grants were awarded in the amount of \$289,300. Since then, the Foundation and its funds have awarded over \$30 million in grant money to more than 250 nonprofit organizations in our area. In addition to awarding grants where warranted, the Foundation staff is dedicated to developing the internal capacity of nonprofit organizations. We provide training sessions to assist with business operations and to further assist in their receipt of out-of-county funds from state, federal, and private sources.

The Foundation made its biggest and most impactful gift yet with the opening of the Bankhead House & Heritage Center. Purchased, renovated, and maintained by the Foundation because of the generosity of a few special donors, the Bankhead House & Heritage Center is here to serve our community as a treasure trove of information, artifacts, cultural events, and varied forms of art that connect our proud past to our optimistic present while showcasing our bright future.

In 2011, disaster struck our county in the form of tornados. From those first days, a different kind of relationship was brokered between the Foundation and Walker County nonprofits involved in disaster relief. We quit being just the funder and became a partner. We forged stronger bonds with local donors as well as regional and national funders. Because of our leadership, we became known throughout the state as the ones to call with questions because we were "getting it done in Walker County."

In 2014, the Foundation created its own strategic plan and began to lead the way in planning for Walker County as a whole with partners, including the Walker County Commission, Chamber of Commerce of Walker County, Jasper Industrial Development Board, Walker County Economic Development Authority, Senator Greg Reed, and all of the municipalities in our county. While robust, the plan is moving our community forward in positive ways.

The Foundation was fortunate to receive substantial financial gifts in 2018, tripling the size of our endowment. Through all the gifts the Foundation has received over time, we now have the ability to fund the dreams of our community or citizens—expanding their scope of influence—in addition to meeting our nonprofits operational needs.

We celebrated our 25th Anniversary in 2020, as well as fought a pandemic and dealt with the aftermath of a tornado. The Foundation staff will tell you, it's been our strongest year in terms of serving our community and making things happen in Walker County.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Kevin F. Callahan  
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Emily Donaldson



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BANKHEAD HOUSE & HERITAGE CENTER

## PROVING SCIENCE WRONG

If you do a little research, you will learn it takes a population of at least **100,000** people to build a successful Community Foundation. The area around Walker County has proven the research wrong. Over the last **27 years**, we have received more than **\$88 million** in gifts and granted over **\$30 million** to more than **250 nonprofits** serving our community. Simple math says we should only have **\$58 million** left in assets. Again, reality outperforms the “should be.” Today, the total assets of your Community Foundation exceed **\$94 million**.

Over the last **27 years**, we have received more than **\$88 million** in gifts and granted over **\$29 million** to nonprofits serving our community.

We can shape the future together. That’s the real story of the Foundation.

By investing in this generation, we invest in tomorrow’s promise.

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