

25 YEARS AGO,

THE WALKER AREA COMMUNITY

FOUNDATION WAS JUST AN IDEA.

THAT IDEA, ALONG WITH THOUGHTFUL

PLANNING AND ACTION, HAS BECOME

ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING

COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

IN THE UNITED STATES.



WALKER AREA Community Foundation

25 YEARS of SUSTAINABLE GIVING

/ A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN /

Friends of the Foundation,

It seems unusual that a Foundation in rural Walker County, Alabama would find its place in national publications showcasing growth. Unusual as it may seem, it is not hard to see why. We are a community of people that care for each other, know the importance of giving and teach the next generation to do the same. Our accomplishments haven't happened overnight, just as our problems haven't happened overnight. We share your frustrations with the constant negative reports about Walker County on regional and national news. I think we can agree that it takes all of us working together to continue the change from negative to positive.



We all see the effects substance abuse disorder has on our most vulnerable population and want to end the constant cycle into which so many of our children are born.

We understand that transportation is a barrier to work, to go the grocery store and to make it to the doctor for medications.

We recognize the need for better access to early childhood learning.

We know that job creation and skill training are important to build a workforce in Walker County.

We realize the value of mental health care for children, especially for those whose little lives are ripe with trauma, and desire for schools to have the resources they need to address this issue.

There will always be community issues, yet here is our promise to you—there will always be a Walker Area Community Foundation to help deal with those issues. We will always be here to empower our citizens to create change; to encourage our nonprofits to dream bigger and to fund them to do so; to engage our local city governments and county leadership to plan together a course of action that occasion and conscience demand.

Walker Area Community Foundation fully believes our greatest days are not the ones behind us, but the ones before us. With your help, we are building a better life for all who live and work in Walker County. With your continued support, our next 25 years will transform our community. With all of us working together, it's going to be amazing.

ROBIN REED ALLEN

Chairman, Board of Directors

/ JOHN OLIVER / SUE LETT /

“Rome wasn’t built in a day, but every day we are building Rome.” You may have heard or read some version of this quote throughout the years, but the Foundation staff heard this version repeatedly from John T. Oliver, Jr. He knows the concept well, as it has been his life’s mission to build a Walker County that is climbing the ladder of prosperity while leaving behind the ladder for the next generation.

Oliver found success as the President of First National Bank of Jasper, but found purpose in leading the Bankhead Foundation, and then, in creating the Walker Area Community Foundation. His influence brought the original gift of \$6 million to begin the Foundation. His vision brought the first Board of Directors to the table. His encouragement engaged the first generation of donors, leading to financial gifts for our permanent endowment. His compassion taught Walker County nonprofit organizations how to apply for and receive grants for their programs and staff.

As all great, visionary leaders find, they must have help to bring their dreams into reality. Sue Lett, Oliver’s longtime assistant, provided the backbone the Foundation needed to conduct business. For the first five years, Lett handled all the Foundation’s donations and communications with the community. Lett’s calm personality and strong sense of fiscal responsibility gave donors, confidence in investing their charitable gifts with the Foundation. After staff was hired, she continued to manage the finances for the next 17 years.

Together, Oliver and Lett built the Foundation from which we now work. We may not have Rome built yet, but as Oliver taught us to do, every day we build Rome.



We may not have our own
version of Rome built yet,
but as Oliver taught us to do,
every day we build Rome.



/ CRISTY MOODY / CAROL SAVAGE /

Larry Drummond was one of the first board members for the Walker Area Community Foundation. Jack Allen, also a previous board member, reflects, “I remember one of Larry’s best ideas was to hire Carol Savage. Our board was discussing whether we could afford to justify hiring an employee, and Larry’s comment was that we couldn’t afford not to. It was his prodding and long-term vision that gave our board the encouragement it needed to hire staff.”

Savage became the first Executive Director of the Foundation in 2000. She set up the first office and led us through our formative years, putting a face on the Foundation in the community. She spoke at civic clubs, churches and promotional events, introducing the Foundation’s purpose and ability to help nonprofit organizations build capacity.

Savage, while a great visionary leader, needed some assistance. Cristy Moody was hired in 2001 to help create systems and structure for the Foundation. She began by building a database of people who would become future donors, grant reviewers and friends of the Foundation. She created the first newsletter and Savage gave the first Memorial Gift, which has become the Foundation’s primary way of receiving gifts. Over the years, this duo created the Grant Review Process, organized Annual Luncheons, designed Annual Reports and began researching the need for access to healthcare for qualified, uninsured residents in Walker County.

Savage retired from the Foundation in 2011 but continues to volunteer at the Bankhead House & Heritage Center, which she helped create. Moody currently serves as the Director of Operations for the Foundation. Larry Drummond may no longer be with us, but his foresight to hire staff, specifically Carol Savage, was one of the best decisions made thus far.



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”

/ JACK ALLEN / PAUL KENNEDY /

“With any effort that you have invested your heart and soul into, you want it to prosper. I fully intend to stay engaged in the Foundation’s business but am turning the reins over to someone that can nurture this organization, help it grow and worry about it day and night. After a long and thoughtful process, your staff and your Board of Directors believe we have found that person.”

These words, spoken by Carol Savage at the Annual Luncheon in 2007, introduced Paul Kennedy as our next leader. Kennedy came to us from Cawaco Resource Conservation & Development Council, a Birmingham area nonprofit. His impact on the Foundation and this community has been just as impressive. Under his leadership, we have grown from \$12 million in assets and three employees to \$72 million in assets with six employees, six initiatives and a fully operational Bankhead House & Heritage Center.

Carol’s words could have just as easily been said by John T. Oliver, Jr. as he handed the reigns of Board Chairman over to Jack Allen in 2010. Allen instilled the importance of fiscal accountability into the board and staff, establishing many of the financial processes we have in place today. When the tornadoes of 2011 came, Allen was the first to say that the Foundation should invest our money and staff time to aid our community. He led us as we formed policies and procedures for the Bankhead House & Heritage Center and encouraged us to engage volunteers in our efforts. Jack believed that because of the Community Foundation, Walker County’s brightest days were ahead of us, and because of his confidence, the staff and board believed it as well.



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”

/ LONA COURINGTON / PAM FIKES /

On APRIL 27, 2011, Walker County awoke to tornado sirens and high winds. The Foundation had a scheduled a Board of Directors meeting that day, so our staff arrived at the office to check on damage and to prepare for the meeting. At that time, Pam Fikes was the Executive Director of the Walker County Chapter of the American Red Cross and Lona Courington the Executive Director of the Salvation Army. Without our prompting, both arrived at the Foundation early that morning to ask Paul Kennedy to drive with them throughout the county to assess the damage.

Within minutes, our Board meeting was cancelled. The Foundation quickly became the convener of all interested parties. We brought together our local EMA, organizations, churches and the affected municipalities to ensure there was strong communication.

After a few days, FEMA descended on Walker County, and the Foundation became the fiscal agent for the county's Long-term Recovery Committee. The Foundation set aside its Spring Grant Cycle and dedicated that \$250,000 to create the Emergency Unmet Needs Fund. Over the next two years, the Disaster Relief Fund received \$1,663,503.54 in gifts and grants from around the United States. Together with volunteers from around the world, we repaired 178 houses and built 8 homes, bringing our survivors back to living situations that were safe, sanitary and secure.

April 27, 2011, changed the course of the Foundation for the future. We realized we had the capacity to do more than just react to the grants coming before us. We could be proactive and dig deep into the issues concerning our society. We had no way of knowing how Pam and Lona arriving in our parking lot that day would change us, but we are grateful for it.



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/ ALEC GRANT / WILL GRANT /

Established by Walter Will Bankhead, the Bankhead Foundation supports charitable purposes in Walker County. In 2011, the Bankhead Foundation placed its trust and funds into the Community Foundation as The Bankhead Fund. At that time, the Bankhead Foundation President John T. Oliver, Jr. said, “Placing our foundation into the Walker Area Community Foundation seemed like a logical and economic way to perpetuate the Bankhead family tradition of philanthropy. By eliminating certain accounting and regulatory filings, these cost savings make more funds available for giving.”

Mr. Oliver, Alec Grant and Emelil Humphries together made the funding decisions for the Bankhead Foundation and continue to advise the Foundation board on distributions from the Bankhead Fund today. Their support of nonprofit organizations has allowed many projects to impact the lives of Walker County citizens for many years. The Bankhead Fund is a strong supporter of the United Way of Central Alabama and the Walker County Department of Human Resources.

The importance of giving back has always been a priority to the Bankhead family. Handed down through generations, the Bankhead Foundation, and now Fund, allows family members to invest in their community. Recently, Will Grant began serving alongside dad and family and says, “The Bankhead Fund has provided me the opportunity to return to my hometown and give back to a community that has meant so much to me and my family. It is a gift to be able to go down a familiar road with a completely different perspective—a coming home through giving back.”

The addition of the Bankhead Fund in 2011 gave the Foundation the ability to support larger grant requests for a greater number of nonprofit organizations, building our impact in Walker County and the surrounding area.

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/ MIMI HUDSON / PAT MORRISON /

“Thanks to the generosity of members of the Bankhead and Drummond families, we have been able to acquire and restore the William Brockman Bankhead home. It serves as a place for events and a venue to display historical memorabilia. Because of their generosity, our Foundation was able to obtain this facility without having to borrow money or in any way diminish our primary mission of grant making.” This quote by John T. Oliver, Jr. is the first of many educating the public of the importance of the Bankhead House & Heritage Center. While construction was a vital part of this project, deciding what to do inside the building held just as much importance.

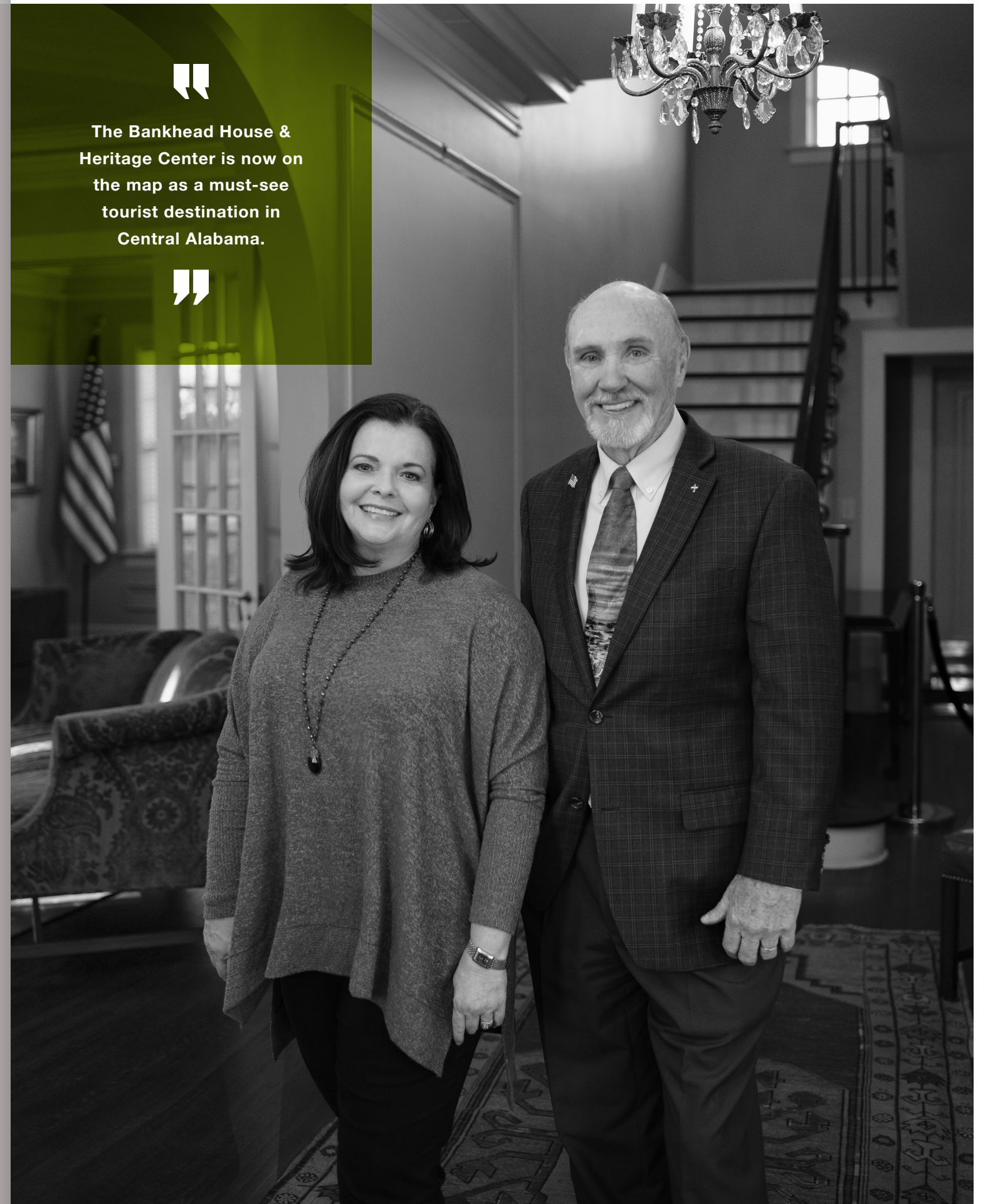
Pat Morrison, local historian and friend of the Foundation, was asked to create a Heritage Council that would set policies and cast a vision for the Bankhead House. Morrison immediately brought in community members to give their advice and volunteer their time toward this worthy cause. Their insight has created a Heritage Center that is beloved by our community and by visitors from across the nation.

Once the doors were opened, the Foundation realized the Bankhead House needed a staff member dedicated to its daily affairs and hired Mimi Hudson as Director of Community Relations. She specifically works with the Exhibit Committee, comprised of Pat & Helen Morrison, Brenda Beard, Barbara Medders and Carl Goforth, to create the exhibits we see displayed throughout the year. She also organizes the Amphitheater Concert Event Series each summer.

Under the leadership of Morrison and Hudson, the Bankhead House & Heritage Center is now on the map as a must-see tourist destination in Central Alabama.



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/ ELYSE PETERS / ANNE ALLEN /

Robert Wood Johnson II was an American businessman who devoted his life to public service and to building the family firm of Johnson & Johnson. His sense of personal responsibility toward society was expressed when he left virtually all his estate to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), creating one of the world's largest private philanthropies. The RWJF annually releases a Health Ranking Report for each state and organizes the information county-by-county.

A decade ago, the Walker Area Community Foundation, along with the United Way of Central Alabama, University of Alabama, Capstone Rural Health Center, and Brookwood Baptist Health System, began looking into the findings from this report. Residents of Walker County ranked at the bottom of the chart among Alabama counties in regard to their health and well-being. Rates of diabetes, premature death, and infant and child mortality are higher than the Alabama average.

Together, these five organizations launched the Walker County Health Action Partnership to make Walker County a healthier place to live, learn, work and play. Anne Allen, formerly of Brookwood Baptist and Elyse Peters, Director of the Health Action Partnership, have spent the last decade weaving together collaborative efforts large and small to drive collective impact.

Allen's influence in the medical community brought partners to the table to give insight and overcome barriers. Peters' ability to build consensus and foster a sustainable plan have increased our health outcomes from last to currently 60TH out of 67 counties. The Health Action Partnership has examples of successful projects and ongoing work on their website: healthactionpartnership.org



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The Walker County
Health Action Partnership
helps make Walker County
a healthier place to live,
learn, work and play.
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/ EDDIE JACKSON / BETH THORNE STUKES /

After the tornadoes of 2011, our community needs were great. We knew we needed to put together a plan that involved all our municipalities, county government and businesses to determine what our most pressing needs were and to develop a sense of teamwork. Eddie Jackson was appointed Chairman of the Foundation Board of Directors around this time and sincerely wanted to change the status quo in our community.

The Board of Directors hired Clarus Consulting to bring life, form and substance to our ideas and dreams. Over the last five years, we have followed the Strategic Plan set forth by the community. We have established teams of individuals focused on the six priorities outlined in the plan, and we are gaining traction in each area. Under Jackson's leadership we have empowered our citizens, and they have embraced that new role.

Beth Thorne Stukes followed Jackson as the next Chairperson for the Board of Directors and continued developing the Foundation's initiatives, as well as strengthening our core mission of supporting nonprofit organizations. It is Stukes' belief that our work is the underlying support system for nonprofit agencies impacting lives in our area. We offer both funding for projects as well as training sessions for their staff and board members.

All nonprofits depend on the gracious gifts of our community to survive and grow. Stukes' leadership in this area led to unprecedented 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 apply for what they need to expand and grow.

Because of Jackson and Stukes, this Foundation and this community will never be the same.



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/ MIKE PUTMAN / JENNY BROWN SHORT /

Walker County has an abundance of natural resources, and the Walker County Health Action Partnership wants to make sure people know how to access them. Thanks to the leadership of Jenny Short and the Livable Communities priority group, many of you may have seen Boat Launch signs as you drive down Walker County roads crossing over our creeks and rivers. Because of Short's work, kayak and canoe lovers now have access to our local waterways.

Walker County Lake is also becoming a hub of recreational activity. With an extended walking track and Alabama's first fully accessible archery park, Walker County Lake is the local place to go for fishing, boating, birding and exercise.

Take a short drive downtown, and you find another hub of activity. Mike Putman, Executive Director of Jasper Main Street, has led Jasper's efforts to revitalize downtown, and we all can see visible results. The Community Foundation, City of Jasper, businesses, private partnerships and individuals have rallied around this initiative because everyone wants to be a part of creating a thriving community.

Short, who is also the Board Chair for Jasper Main Street, and Putman have increased the quality of life in our community with their energy, as well as their ability to target grant dollars outside of Walker County. Together, they recently received a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (1 of 10 given nationwide) to provide technical assistance to help us develop a plan to create a recreational-based economy, utilizing our natural resources to be a selling point for Jasper. Their combined work is building even more pride in the community we call home.

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By the Numbers

\$23,454,463

Total amount of grants awarded to nonprofit organizations over the last 25 years

\$72,387,187

Total amount of assets held by the Community Foundation

\$6,000,000

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

3,364

Number of grants made to nonprofit organizations since inception

70,000

Number of people whose quality of life has improved because of the Community 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
TOTALS	\$23,454,463	\$74,215,171	

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