



UNITED WAY
East Central Alabama

Newsletter:
March 2025



A Year of Milestones for United Way of East Central Alabama

As we look back on the first quarter of 2025, we are thrilled to celebrate two major achievements that highlight the heart of our mission: addressing critical needs in our community and empowering the next generation.

Opening the Community's only Emergency Homeless Shelter

This year, United Way of East Central Alabama proudly opened the doors to the county's only emergency homeless shelter, a vital resource for individuals and families facing housing insecurity. This shelter represents more than just a safe place to sleep—it offers hope, stability, and a pathway to rebuilding lives. Equipped with essential services, the shelter provides access to case management, job training, and connections to vital community resources, ensuring that those in need have the support to transition toward long-term stability.

This milestone would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our community, volunteers, and donors who share our vision for a stronger, more compassionate East Central Alabama. Together, we are addressing one of the most pressing issues in our region and making a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve.

Celebrating Childhood Literacy with a Tribute to Dr. Seuss

In honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday and in celebration of childhood literacy, United Way mobilized an incredible 115 volunteers to visit 117 pre-k and kindergarten classrooms across Calhoun County. Armed with colorful books and a love for storytelling, these volunteers brought joy and inspiration to hundreds of young learners. Reading aloud to children not only fosters a love for books but also lays the foundation for academic success and lifelong learning. By sharing stories and engaging young minds, we are helping to ignite imaginations, build confidence, and emphasize the importance of literacy in shaping their futures. The event was a resounding success, with students, teachers, and volunteers alike walking away with smiles, memories, and a renewed commitment to the power of reading.

Looking Ahead

United Way of East Central Alabama remains committed to meeting the diverse needs of our community in 2025 and beyond. From addressing homelessness to investing in education, we are working tirelessly to create a brighter future for everyone. Thank you for your continued support in making these initiatives possible. Together, we are changing lives and building a stronger community, one step at a time.

Give today!



www.uweca.org/donate





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Program Spotlight: Empowering Futures - The Impact of WorkFORCE Connections (WFC)

The WorkFORCE Connections (WFC) program at United Way of East Central Alabama, led by Program Director Amber Butler and her dedicated team – Ke'Ana Wynn, Betsy Wright, and Jamarkis Scales – continue to make a transformative impact on students in our community. Through strong partnerships with industry leaders and post-secondary institutions, the WFC team is helping students achieve their educational and career aspirations.

Empowering Youth Through Skills and Certifications

The WFC team's dedication has resulted in remarkable achievements. Recently, they assisted students in earning their Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) and driver's licenses, equipping them with vital skills and certifications to secure meaningful employment. One such success story is Jasmin, a committed WFC participant who successfully completed her Driver's Education course and obtained her driver's license – a significant step toward gaining independence and enhancing her career prospects.

WFC students are also giving back to the community. In November, participants actively volunteered in United Way's Day of Action, demonstrating their commitment to service. Additionally, students recently attended Gadsden State's Preview Day, where they explored academic and career pathways, gaining valuable insights into their post-secondary options.

Building Brighter Futures

The WorkFORCE Connections program is dedicated to empowering at-risk youth in Calhoun County by providing educational opportunities, career counseling, and work-readiness training. The program's incentive-based model encourages engagement and offers paid apprenticeships, connecting participants with rewarding careers in high-demand industries.

Through mentorship, education, and meaningful partnerships, the WFC team exemplifies United Way's mission to empower individuals and strengthen communities. Their unwavering dedication is opening doors for students to succeed – and shaping a brighter future for our region. Stay tuned for more updates on the remarkable achievements of the WorkFORCE Connections program!



Amber Butler



WFC
Program
Director

Ke'Ana Wynn



Youth
Opportunity
Specialist

Betsy Wright



WFC
Program
Coach

Jamarkis Scales



WFC
Program
Coach

Impact in Numbers

The program's impact is reflected in the outstanding outcomes achieved over the past two years:

2023-2024 Year

- 33 active students and 24 follow-up students
- Among WFC's active students:
 - 31 graduated high school
 - 1 earned a certification credential
 - 19 gained employment
 - 13 enrolled in post-secondary education
 - 6 lost to follow-up
- Among follow-up students:
 - 1 obtained their GED
 - 12 gained employment
 - 6 enrolled in post-secondary education
 - 10 unknown employment/post-secondary status due to loss of contact

2025 Year (So Far)

- Actively serving 39 students in Phase 1 and 34 students in Phase 2
- 7 follow-up students have enrolled in post-secondary education
- Nearly 20 participants have already gained employment

The Numbers

