



**UNITED WAY**  
East Central Alabama



## Newsletter: September 2025

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### Celebrating 70 Years of Our Local United Way!

August 28, 2025 marked a milestone moment – 70 years of United Way of East Central Alabama! During this week, our community came together at the **Together We Thrive** Annual Luncheon to celebrate seven decades of generosity, resilience, and hope. The room was filled with energy, inspiration, and the incredible spirit of giving that has defined this region for generations.



#### A Legacy of Giving

The story of United Way in East Central Alabama stretches back over a century. In 1922, the Rotary Club of Calhoun County and the Kiwanis Club of Anniston planted the first seeds of generosity, creating the United Givers Fund. What began as a simple idea to help neighbors in need eventually grew into today's United Way of East Central Alabama – an organization that has been standing united with our community since 1955.

For 70 years, United Way has walked alongside families through challenges and triumphs, always focused on building hope and ensuring no one is left behind.



#### Highlights from the 70th Anniversary Luncheon

**Keynote Speaker** – We were honored to welcome Lindsay Cline, a Calhoun County native and current Director of Strategic Partnerships at the U.S. Navy Maritime Industrial Base. Lindsay shared her powerful story of perseverance and the importance of embracing our true selves. Her message reminded us how shared experiences can connect us and inspire resilience across generations.

**Generations of Giving Panel** – This year's luncheon also featured a heartfelt panel discussion exploring how the legacy of giving continues to shape our region. Our panelists shared personal perspectives on how generosity is passed down and why it remains the heartbeat of community strength.

**Lifetime of Excellence Award** – A special moment of the afternoon was honoring Rodney Owens with United Way's Lifetime of Excellence Award. Rodney has been a steadfast volunteer and supporter for decades, embodying the values of service, leadership, and compassion. His recognition was met with a standing ovation and heartfelt applause.



#### Looking Ahead

As we celebrate the last 70 years, we also look to the next 70. United Way's mission has always been about more than just raising funds – it's about raising hope, building connections, and ensuring every person has the opportunity to thrive.

We are deeply grateful to our donors, supporters, and sponsors whose commitment continues to fuel this mission. Together, we are stronger. Together, we are United.



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## **2025 Day of Kindness: A Community Rallies Around Martha's Hope**

United Way of East Central Alabama is proud to share the remarkable success of our inaugural United to End Homelessness campaign, which not only met – but exceeded – its \$100,000 goal, **raising more than \$122,000 in support of Martha's Hope: The Martha Vandervoort Center to End Homelessness**. This month-long fundraising and awareness effort brought together an unprecedented coalition of local businesses, faith-based organizations, volunteers, and clients for a powerful display of compassion and community action.

**A Day of Kindness, A Lifetime of Impact** - On June 13, more than 120 volunteers from area churches, the Alabama Power Service Organization, the Jacksonville State University football team, and the community joined forces with over 15 clients of Martha's Hope. Together, they rolled up their sleeves and got to work—constructing 56 new emergency shelter beds, applying fresh, trauma-informed paint throughout the facility, and installing rockscaping to reduce long-term landscaping costs. By the end of the day, every project was complete – a testament to the power of unity and action.

**Boil for a Cause: Celebrating Community Commitment** - Later that evening, despite rainy skies, supporters gathered at The Sinclair Social for a festive Low-Country Boil, catered by Kristy Farmer, to commemorate the campaign's success. Together with United Way President & CEO Shannon Jenkins and Board Chairperson Erin Griffith, we recognized a game-changing \$50,000 matching gift from SAGA Construction, Sunny King Automotive Group, and SAMCO. This bold challenge to the community doubled the campaign's impact and fueled momentum that continues to this day.

**Martha's Hope: A Shelter and So Much More** - As East Alabama's only emergency shelter welcoming men, women, and families, Martha's Hope fills a crucial gap in rural homeless services. The center offers not just a safe place to sleep, but also comprehensive wraparound services, including case management, mental health support, and pathways to permanent housing. Funds raised through the campaign will sustain Martha's Hope operations through 2025 and ensure continued support for some of our region's most vulnerable neighbors.

**The Work Continues** - The United to End Homelessness campaign stands as proof that when a community comes together, lives are changed. To learn more about Martha's Hope or to get involved, visit: <http://www.uweca.org/marthashope>.

