



Greater Valdosta United Way

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



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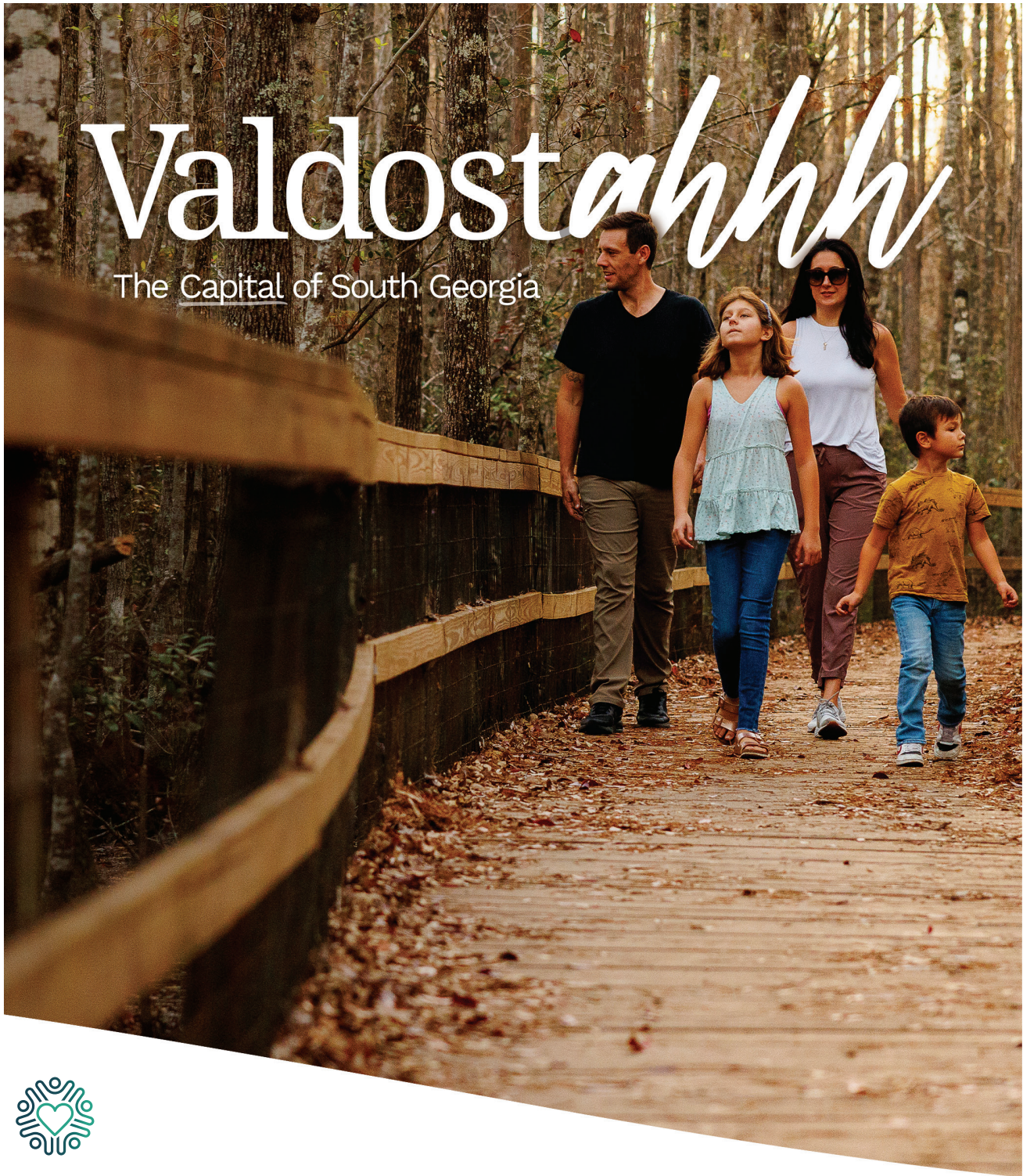
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Valdostaahhh

The Capital of South Georgia



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We're proud to partner with the Greater Valdosta United Way to help give everyone in our community the opportunity to thrive. Join us in support of building a stronger community through volunteering and supporting local businesses. **Share your Valdostaahh moments with us using #ahhhmoments.**

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GEORGIA

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GREATER VALDOSTA UNITED WAY

The Greater Valdosta United Way is focused on helping families put food on the table, pay utility bills, fund afterschool programs, tackle homelessness, and escape domestic violence.

We are committed to investing in organizations that provide life's basic needs. We support programs that promote academic success, empower people to live healthier lives, and create financial stability.

Last year, GVUW awarded \$650,000 to 20 local nonprofit partners and \$16,674 to non-United Way organizations. Additionally, we distributed over \$62,000 in grants to help nonprofits build capacity and expand their programs and services.

Through a united effort, the GVUW works with local, state, and federal policymakers to shape legislation, secure funding, and bring awareness and solutions that address the pressing challenges in our communities.

Nonprofits provided food, shelter, and other critical services during the pandemic at record levels. Unfortunately, the increase in demand came with financial hardships, including rising supply costs, volunteer shortages, and the cancellation of in-person fundraising events.

To provide some much-needed financial assistance, the City of Valdosta chose GVUW to oversee \$955,000 of its \$16.3 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for allocation to local nonprofits negatively impacted by the pandemic. More than 30 Valdosta nonprofit agencies received ARPA funds.

The COVID-19 pandemic escalated the number of children and adults struggling with mental health, leading GVUW to make mental health awareness a primary funding focus. Thanks to a two-year grant from Resilient Georgia, we provided mental health awareness to nearly 5,000 schoolchildren last year. We also reached more than 235,000 people monthly through our mental health awareness campaign, which included billboard, radio, and television advertisements.

GVUW continuously advocates for additional community resources to be brought to South Georgia. Over the last few years, our advocacy efforts have included the expansion of 211, a nationwide referral system that links people to resources; bringing awareness to 988, the national number to dial if you are experiencing a mental health crisis; and securing ALICE data in our state that will provide a picture of the financial hardships our working-class citizens are facing.

This has been a great year for South Georgia, and the GVUW is looking forward to continuing to develop collaborative solutions to critical community issues, investing in programs that strengthen our communities, and advocating for positive change.

Thank you to our donors, corporate sponsors, volunteers, community leaders, nonprofit partners, incredible team, and Board of Directors for helping us Live United!

MICHAEL SMITH - PRESIDENT/CEO
GREATER VALDOSTA UNITED WAY



MICHAEL SMITH - PRESIDENT/CEO

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*Have a Heart. Lend a Hand.
Make a Difference.*

Proud Partner of the Greater Valdosta United Way

The remarkable people of South Georgia Medical Center pride themselves in giving back, not only in the service of health care but also in the service of people. In FY22, employees volunteered more than 5,000 hours at various agencies and organizations throughout our community. Whether it was packing food boxes at the food bank for the Greater Valdosta United Way's Day of Caring, ringing the bell for the Salvation Army, donating blood, or participating in a 5K, our employees always are willing to step up and help where needed.

Not only do they give of themselves through servitude, but they also give financially to others in need through SGMC's Care Share program, a voluntary payroll deduction that supports the United Way and designated employees experiencing dire financial emergencies. Last year, this program received \$73,509. Of that amount, \$36,754 went directly to the Greater Valdosta United Way.



Boys & Girls Club of Valdosta



LAMP



Second Harvest of South Georgia



Miracle League

ADVOCACY

Together, We Live United

Advocating for an 11-county region, the Greater Valdosta United Way unites community organizations to develop collaborative solutions to critical issues. Focusing on basic needs, housing and shelter, youth and afterschool programs, and mental health awareness, the GVUW advocates for a better quality of life for all residents. Through networking and collaboration with partners, the GVUW can invest in the best evidence-based programs that make the biggest impact in South Georgia.

National & State Advocacy

Michael Smith, President and CEO of the GVUW, serves as the 2022-2023 chair of the United Ways of Georgia Association. He is also a member of the United Way Worldwide National Advisory Council (NAC), where he sheds light on opportunities for United Ways, especially those in rural communities, to improve access to health, financial stability, and educational opportunities.

During a visit to the nation's capital, he met with Georgia Congressmen Earl L. "Buddy" Carter and Austin Scott to discuss issues facing rural and urban communities. While there, he also met with U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff's staff to advocate for more federal funding in South Georgia, particularly targeted at rental assistance and transportation costs.

ALICE: A Study of Financial Hardship

Georgia will soon benefit from its partnership with United for ALICE. A United Way initiative, ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), represents many working families who cannot afford basic expenses like food, housing, child care, and transportation.

For more info on
UNITED FOR ALICE
SCAN HERE



GVUW CEO/President Michael Smith meets with members of the United Way Worldwide National Advisory Council in Washington, D.C.

Mayor Scott James Matheson and Lowndes County Commissioner Scott 'Scottie' Orenstein present a proclamation to Michael Smith, GVUW President/CEO recognizing the Uniting for More annual campaign.



A recent national study found that 60% of U.S. adults, including more than four in 10 high-income consumers, live paycheck to paycheck.

Unlike the Federal Poverty Level, which is a snapshot for determining the number and portion of people living in poverty in the U.S., the ALICE report gives a comprehensive and unbiased picture of financial hardship at the local and state levels.

“This will speak to kitchen table issues that impact working families like survivability and income levels,” Smith said. “It’s not a poverty number. Instead, many of these are dual income, middle-class families that struggle to make ends meet because of the rising costs of food, housing, and other expenses.”

The ALICE report will provide the GVUW and its nonprofit partners with valuable information to secure grants and promote economic stability for families.

Help is Coming: 211 Funding for South Georgia

For several years, the GVUW has focused its advocacy efforts on securing the 211 system for South Georgia residents. Using an extensive database, 211 referral specialists direct people to local agencies that provide food, clothing, shelter, rent and utility assistance. They also provide physical and mental health information, crisis intervention, job training, transportation options, and more.

“There are a variety of resources available, but people don’t always know they exist or where to find them,” said Smith. “A lot of the time, if people don’t see a resource listed in their county, they think it doesn’t exist. We need 211 in our area. South Georgia already has limited resources. People need to know help is out there.”

The 988 number for suicide prevention and mental health crisis care was launched last year. Like 911 and 211, the 988 dialing code is confidential, free, and available 24/7/365, connecting people experiencing a mental health, substance abuse, or suicidal crisis with a trained crisis counselor. The conversation can be accessed via phone, text, and chat. Smith expects to receive 211 funds in Georgia’s FY24 budget and have calls operational by fall 2023.



GVUW CEO/President Michael Smith worked with state legislators, including Senator Russ Goodman and Representative James Burchett to secure funding to extend the 211 system into South Georgia.

211	988	911
NON-EMERGENCIES	SUICIDE AND CRISIS	EMERGENCIES
Food	Thoughts of Suicide	Medical
Housing	Mental Health Crisis	Fire
Utility Assistance	Substance Use Crisis	Crime
Healthcare Services	Emotional Distress	Abduction
Transportation	Veterans Crisis	Domestic Violence
Legal Services		Impaired Driving
Counseling		Suspicious Activities



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Powering Our Future

We support organizations like the United Way, which support our communities across Georgia. Thank you for the continued support in Valdosta and around the state, where we all live and work.



BY THE NUMBERS 2022

United
Way



Greater Valdosta United Way

\$16,674

NON-UNITED WAY
NONPROFIT AGENCIES

\$18,637

DISTRIBUTED IN
DISASTER & UTILITY
ASSISTANCE

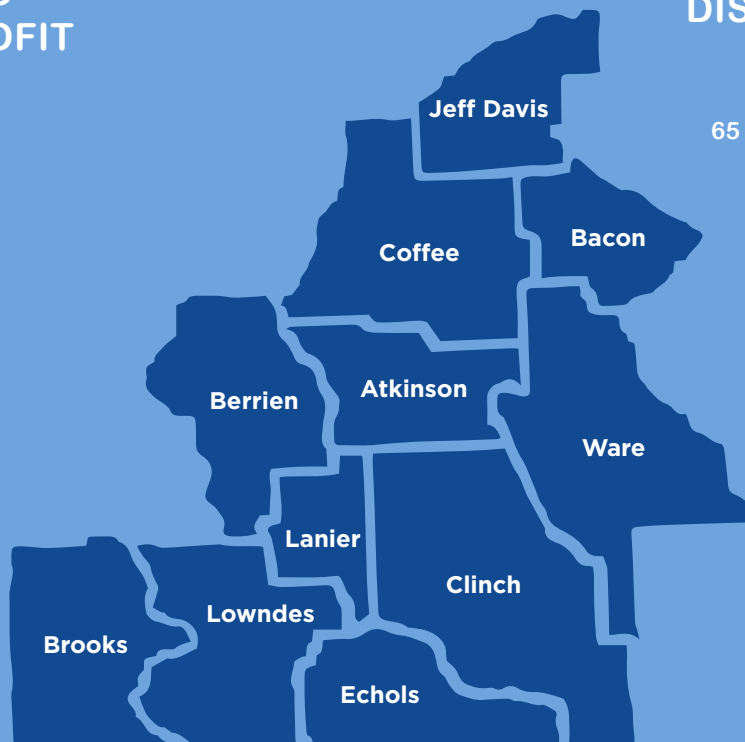
264 REQUESTS
65 HOUSEHOLDS ASSISTED

\$650,000

INVESTMENT TO
PARTNER NON-PROFIT
AGENCIES

11,000+

FOOD
DISTRIBUTION
IN POUNDS



14

PANTRY BOX
LOCATIONS

\$33,912

EMERGENCY
FOOD & SHELTER
PROGRAM

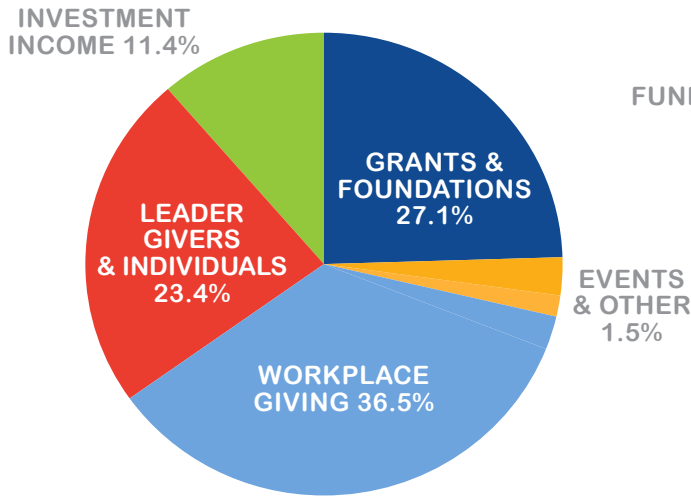
\$62,175

COMMUNITY IMPACT
GRANTS

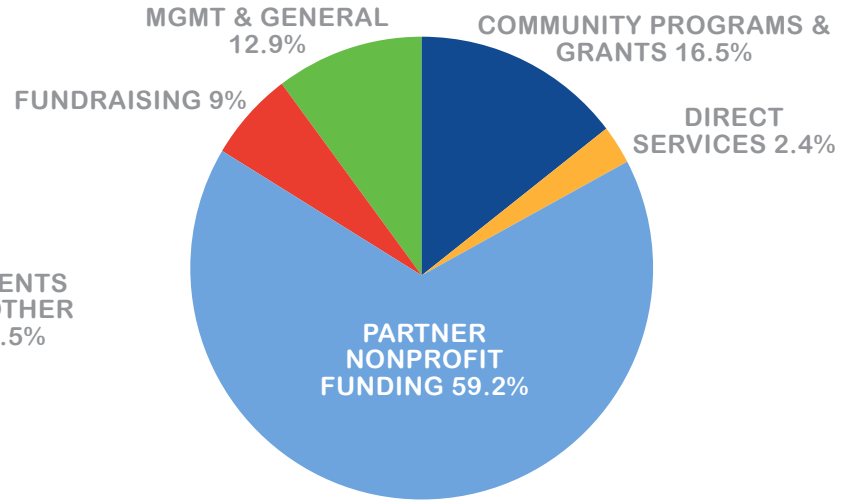
\$51,195

MENTAL HEALTH
TRAINING
& AWARENESS

REVENUES 2022



EXPENSES 2022



\$ **1,179,040**

TOTAL INCOME 2022



\$ **939,881**

TOTAL EXPENSES 2022

UNITING FOR MORE



Greater Valdosta United Way

G

Basic Needs

I

Housing and Shelter

V

Mental Health Training & Awareness

E

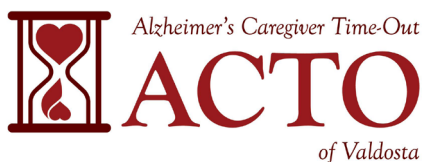
Youth / After School Programs

SERVING: ATKINSON.BACON.BERRIEN.BROOKS.CLINCH.COFFEE.ECHOLS.JEFF DAVIS.LANIER.LOWNDES.WARE

NON-PROFIT PARTNERS



Greater Valdosta United Way



For more information visit: www.gvuw.org

2022 Program Support

In 2022, the Greater Valdosta United Way provided \$650,000 to 20 partner nonprofits to fund various programs and services that address health, education, financial stability, and basic needs. Every program is evaluated, measured, and reported for impact and investment over time to ensure they make a difference in the areas that matter the most.

Alzheimer's Caregiver Time-out (ACTO)

Respite care for the elderly

American Red Cross

Disaster Cycle Services, Biomedical Services, and Blood Saves Lives

South Georgia Council, Boy Scouts of America

Programs for Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venturing

Boys & Girls Club of Valdosta

Afterschool and summer programs

Children's Advocacy Center

Prevention and health, mental health and child abuse services

Camp Rock of Georgia

Wilderness and summer camps

Easter Seals Southern Georgia

Family support and specialized medical supplies

Girls on the Run

Heart & Sole program

Habitat for Humanity

New home construction, ReStore, veteran repairs, and Aging in Place

The Haven

Domestic violence, rape crisis and sexual assault, and mental health education

Jacobs' Ladder

Therapeutic horseback riding for people with special needs

Living Bridges Ministry

Transformations Program, educational classes, and food services

Lowndes Associated Ministries of People (LAMP)

Supportive housing for men, women, and families

Lowndes Advocacy Resource Center (LARC)

Habilitation programs for adults with disabilities

Partnership Health Center

Medical and dental services for low income individuals

The Miracle League of Valdosta

Organized sports for youth and adults with disabilities

The Salvation Army

Social service programs and men's emergency shelter

Second Harvest of South Georgia

Hunger relief organizations providing food distribution throughout the region

YMCA

Childcare, aquatics and safety program, and Champions League

Youth Impact Center

Afterschool programs, educational programs, and family counseling services



MAKE AN IMPACT

In 2022, the Greater Valdosta United Way distributed \$62,175 in grants to nonprofits within its 11-county service region. This list does not reflect all of the recipients who were awarded grants by GVUW in 2022.

\$41,000

Bruce Williams Impact Grant

GVUW partner nonprofits received grants for specific programs and services that support education, health, or financial stability.

South Georgia Council, Boys Scouts of America

Archery supplies and equipment

Camp Rock of Georgia

Smart Boards

Children's Advocacy Center

Ceiling fans, filing cabinets, and furniture for therapy areas

Habitat for Humanity

Power tools for home construction, television and equipment for virtual meetings

Jacobs' Ladder

Summer riding camp scholarships for special needs students

Lowndes Advocacy Resource Center (LARC)

Wheelchair vehicle for clients

Lowndes Associated Ministries to People (LAMP)

Ice maker and food warmer

Living Bridges Ministry

Refrigerator, kitchen equipment, and tables

Partnership Health Center

Commercial refrigerator for medications and vaccinations

Second Harvest of South Georgia

Package sealing machine for mobile pantry

The Haven

HVAC unit for shelter

Salvation Army

HVAC unit for shelter

Youth Impact Center

Classroom equipment, smart board, and basketball goal





\$9,600

Community Unity Grant

Distributed to organizations for specific programs and events that promote unity or community relations.

- City of Hahira
- WWALS Watershed Coalition
- Jesus and Jam
- Lakeland-Lanier Chamber of Commerce
- Scottish Rite
- Living Bridges Ministry
- Southside Recreation
- Beautiful Creations
- Toys for Tots

\$7,300

The Jenkin's Child Well-Being Grant

Supports nonprofit programs that positively impact the average and below zones of the Child Well-Being map, including education, enrichment, and health.

- Turner Center for the Arts
- Jesus and Jam
- Magnolia House
- Boys & Girls Club of Coffee County
- Girls on the Run

\$3,275

The Classroom Support Grant

Specifically for programs that assist children with disabilities within the red and orange zones of the Child Well-Being map.

- Lowndes High School
- Lowndes Middle School
- Pinevale Elementary
- Brilliant Minds Academy
- Brooks County Middle School
- Valdosta High School
- J.L. Newbern Middle School
- W.G. Nunn Elementary School

\$1,000

The Wiregrass Printing Grant

GVUW awards partner nonprofits with funds to create key donor engagement and marketing materials.

- Girls on the Run
- Alzheimer's Caregivers Time Out (ACTO)
- Jacobs' Ladder
- Lowndes Associated Ministries to People (LAMP)
- Camp Rock of Georgia

DAYS OF CARING - SPRING

During the 2022 Days of Caring—spring and fall—more than 300 volunteers from Moody Air Force Base and local businesses gave their time and talents to complete projects from landscaping and yard work to painting, food sorting, and carpentry work.



15
PROJECTS

200
VOLUNTEERS



DAYS OF CARING - FALL

12

PROJECTS

150

VOLUNTEERS



CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT



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LANDMARK REALTY &
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PUBLIX

SOUTH GEORGIA MEDICAL
CENTER

SPYDERSERVE WEB
SERVICES

RAINWATER CONFERENCE
CENTER

VALENTI, RACKLEY &
ASSOCIATES

\$21,000
RAISED

72
GOLFERS

Awards & Recognitions

The 2022 Greater Valdosta United Way Awards were voted on by partner nonprofit directors, the GVUW staff and Board of Directors. All GVUW nonprofit partners were dedicated to helping thousands of children and adults in time of need and recover and heal from difficult situations.

DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

Michelle Girtman, Executive Director of The Haven, was selected as Director of the Year. She was selected for her dedication to aiding victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Girtman has worked at The Haven for 15 years and serves as Magnolia House's executive director in Waycross.



AGENCY OF THE YEAR

Darcy Gunter, the co-founder of Living Bridges, accepts the Agency of the Year Award. Living Bridges is a Christian-based nonprofit serving the region's low-income and impoverished population through various programs like a clothes closet, food distribution, and transformation classes.



COMMUNITY HERO

Joe Brownlee, Southwest Georgia Regional Director for Georgia Power, accepted the Community Hero Award on behalf of Georgia Power. The award was given to Georgia Power for its longstanding commitment to numerous civic, community, and philanthropic contributions.



UNITY PARK Amphitheater

The new Unity Park has become Valdosta's newest gathering place for concerts, festivals, holiday events, and community celebrations.

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VALDOSTA
A City Without Limits

dwtv
DOWNTOWN
VALDOSTA

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



Adrian N. Peterson, former Chicago Bear running back, shared his story of dealing with mental health issues with more than 5,000 students, coaches, teachers, and counselors throughout South Georgia.

Jumaine Jones hosted a two-day mental health awareness symposium and shared how he overcame childhood adversities and failures to become a successful NBA player.

A Game-Changer: Athletes Promote Mental Health Awareness

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the world and continues to bring challenges, including elevated mental health and substance abuse cases, especially among lower- and middle-class families.

As part of a regional coalition, the Greater Valdosta United Way received a \$200,000 two-year (\$100,000 per year) matching grant from Resilient Georgia. This grant funds training and educational programs on mental health awareness, suicide prevention, and reducing mental health stigma. The programs also focus on preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that represent potentially traumatic events like violence, abuse, neglect, or having a family member attempt suicide.



Adrian N. Peterson, former Chicago Bears running back and Georgia Southern athlete, returned to South Georgia. He shared with students the impact of bullying, social media stressors, anxiety, and how to deal with failure. He encouraged students to seek trusted adults to discuss their feelings and concerns.

Peterson, the author of "Don't Dis My Abilities," spoke to nearly 5,000 students, teachers, coaches, and school counselors at Valdosta City Schools and Coffee and Ware counties.

Former Georgia Bulldog and NFL player Tra Battle was the guest speaker at the second annual U-Nite Dinner, sponsored by The Haven and GVUW, to raise awareness of mental health issues.

Battle dealt with mental issues, including suicidal thoughts, after losing two long-time friends. He shared that he reached out to former Georgia head coach Mark Richt, who guided him toward the professional care he needed.

Retired NBA player Jumaine Jones shared his struggles with mental illness during the two-day Valdosta Sports Symposium.

Jones, the founder of Beyond the Hardwood, Inc., and A.C. Braswell, a motivational speaker with HOOPS Athletics, teamed up to host a mental health symposium and football and basketball camps for local youths.

As a 16-year professional basketball veteran, Jones shares that while he succeeded on the court, his childhood came with adversities and failures. He aims to motivate youth to be resilient and remove mental health stigma.

✓ **Accomplishments**

Redefined its focus on mental health awareness, was a finalist for Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce's "Non-profit of the Year," and added \$42,000 for mental health awareness and training.

✓ **Advocacy**

Promote access to mental health awareness programs, including 211 and 988 hotlines and ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed).

✓ **Awareness**

7,500 + adults attended ACEs prevention and intervention programs.

✓ **Budget Increase**

Increased funding from \$30,000 to \$150,000 for mental health awareness programs.

✓ **Promotion**

235,000 + people reached. Mental health awareness campaign included billboards, radio, and TV ads.

✓ **Research**

Partnered with Valdosta State University Center for South Georgia Regional Impact to develop a Community Needs Assessment survey.

✓ **Youth Attendance**

Nearly 5,000 4th-12th graders attended "Tackling Mental Health" with Adrian Peterson.



Former Georgia Bulldog and NFL player Tra Battle was the guest speaker at the second annual U-Nite Dinner sponsored by The Haven and GVUW. He also spoke with schoolchildren to raise awareness of mental health issues.

ARPA FUNDING

ARPA NON-PROFIT ALLOCATION COMMITTEE

Michael Smith
GVUW PRESIDENT/CEO

Marty Ellison
GVUW VICE CHAIR

Andy Griffin
GVUW TREASURER

Jennifer Denham
GVUW SECRETARY

Kent Patrick
GVUW PAST CHAIR

Joe Brownlee
GVUW BOARD MEMBER

A.C. Braswell
SOUTH GA DIVERSITY CHAIR

Sam Allen
SOUTH GA DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEMBER

Greg Powell
SOUTH GA DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEMBER

Brittany Hull
GVUW BOARD CHAIR

Angela Ward
SOUTH GA DIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEMBER

City of Valdosta Awards ARPA Funding to Local Nonprofits

While the COVID-19 pandemic threw many people, businesses, and organizations into financial hardship and the unknown, nonprofits stepped up to fill the gap. However, many nonprofits faced challenges due to the soaring costs of supplies and increased demand for assistance. From the loss of volunteers to the cancellation of in-person fundraising events, mounting obstacles created short- and long-term hardships.

Coming to the rescue, the City of Valdosta allocated \$955,000 of its \$16.3 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to assist local nonprofits that were negatively impacted by the pandemic.

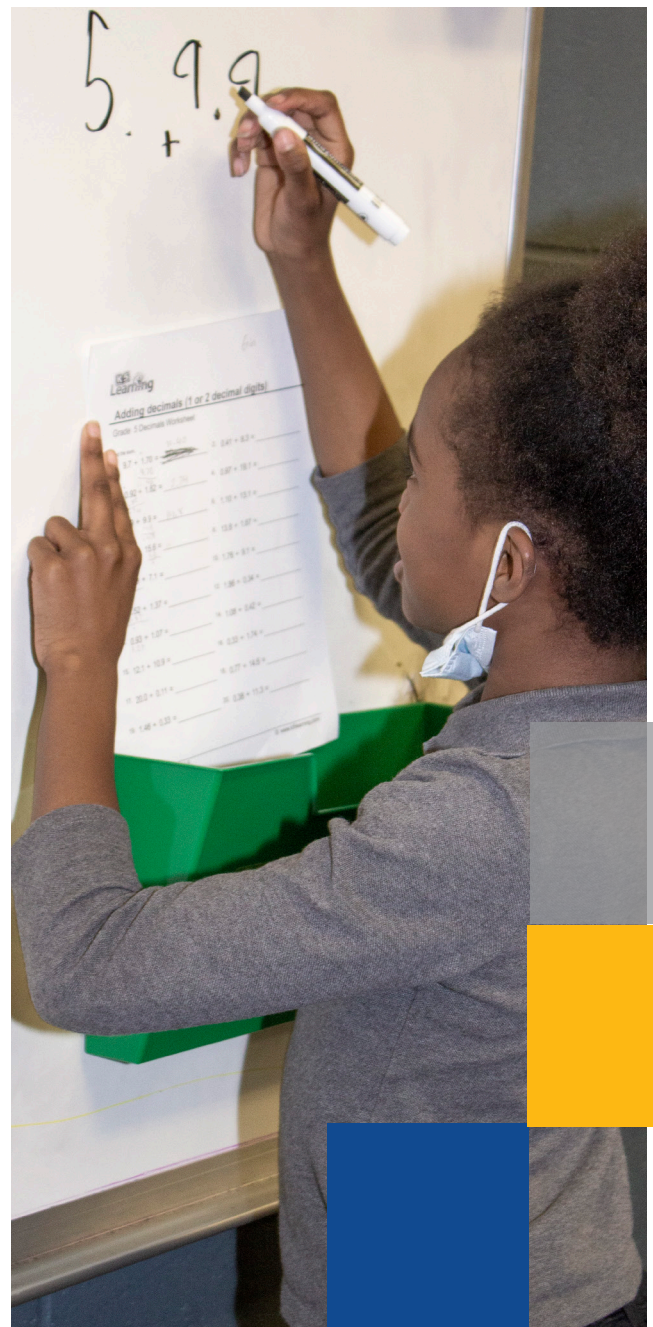
The City of Valdosta partnered with the Greater Valdosta United Way to establish the ARPA Non-Profit Allocation Committee. The 11-person committee evaluated 36 applications, scored them based on need, and submitted its recommendations to the Valdosta City Council for approval.

More than 30 Valdosta area nonprofit agencies were awarded ARPA funds, with LAMP, Boys and Girls Club of Valdosta, and The Haven receiving in excess of \$50,000, which requires additional reporting from the agency to the city and U.S. Treasury Department.

Valdosta Councilwoman Vivian Miller-Cody and Councilman Andy Gibbs provided oversight to the committee to ensure funds were properly dispersed.

"This was an amazing partnership and I want to thank all the committee members for their tireless efforts," said Gibbs, "The ARPA funds will help improve the lives of local individuals and families throughout our community."

"During the pandemic, nonprofits continued to stay open and provide essential services for our community's most vulnerable population," said GVUW President and CEO Michael Smith. "We appreciate the City of Valdosta for recognizing the value nonprofits play during a crisis and everyday life as they help people in our community survive and thrive."





VALDOSTA ARPA NONPROFIT AWARDS

ACTO of Valdosta \$15,500

Advancing Valdosta Inc. \$10,000

Almost Home Charities \$5,000

Annette Howell Turner Center \$30,000

Beautiful Creations \$8,000

Boys and Girls Club \$85,000

Camp Rock of Georgia, Inc. \$32,500

Children's Advocacy Center \$30,000

Coastal Plain Area Economic Authority \$46,000

Commission for Children & Youth \$30,000

Copeland African American Museum VSU \$15,000

Girls on the Run South Georgia \$20,000

Habitat for Humanity \$40,000

The Haven \$83,000

LAMP \$82,500

LARC \$49,500

Living Bridges \$30,000

National Council of Negro Women \$10,000

Partnership Health Center \$49,500

Quola-LC/CDC INC. \$16,000

The Salvation Army \$46,000

Second Harvest South Georgia \$49,500

Snake Nation Press \$5,000

South GA Council, Boy Scouts \$27,500

South Georgia Partnership to End Homelessness \$47,000

Southside Recreation Center \$35,000

Special Olympics \$20,000

TEACH \$20,500

Valdosta Heritage Foundation \$5,000

WIKU Family Resource Center \$7,000

WWALS Watershed Coalition \$5,000

YOUTH IMPACT CENTER



SERVICES

- AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM
- ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT
- NUTRITIOUS MEALS
- CHARACTER & LEADERSHIP TRAINING
- SINGLE AND PARENTING CLASSES
- CHRISTIAN COUNSELING FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

MISSION

THE YOUTH IMPACT CENTER IS A CHRISTIAN-BASED AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM WHERE CHILDREN ARE ENCOURAGED TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND PURPOSE AND USE THEIR GOD-GIVEN ABILITIES TO SERVE OTHERS.



Youth IMPACT Center

Positively Impacting the Lives of Children and Families in Lanier County

After serving as a preacher for 23 years, Ryan Tuten felt that his life had a bigger purpose. In 2017, he moved his family from Florida to the rural community of Lakeland, Georgia, and opened the Youth IMPACT Center.

Access to afterschool programs is often scarce in rural communities, and in Lakeland, it was nonexistent. Starting with nine students in an unused, donated gym, the Youth IMPACT Center now has 106 children, with nearly 50 on the waiting list.

Not just a place to keep kids until their parents get off work, the Youth IMPACT Center offers a safe space for elementary-aged children to complete their homework, spend time with friends, engage in character development programs, and receive a hot, nutritious meal.

"When they arrive, they receive a snack and playtime," Tuten said. "It's important for them to have time to play and be silly before they start doing their homework."

With the assistance of certified teachers and volunteers, the children complete their homework. And thanks to the donation of 80 Chromebooks from Lanier County Schools, the students can complete missed assignments and receive specialized tutoring.

"Many of our students come from single-income families," Tuten said. "There is a huge need here, not just for help with homework, but for many of our kids; if we didn't provide dinner, they probably wouldn't get an evening meal at home."

With a drastic need to expand, the center recently renovated two warehouses donated by a local business, which now include administrative offices, a library, a dining facility, classrooms, and an activities center.

Through funding from the Greater Valdosta United Way, the Youth IMPACT Center hired Casey Horne, a Licensed Clinical Pastoral Counselor, to lead classes for single moms and provide free counseling services to children and adults in the community.

"Casey brings something totally different to our program," Tuten said. "Local ministers and pastors can set up a time for their members to come to talk to Casey at no charge. She started a grief class, and the single-parent class is more than a parenting class; it is building a community of ladies that can lean on each other and be a valuable resource. It has been impressive to watch this program grow."

Tuten said many of the center's children come from single-parent homes, and supporting parents is essential to its mission.

"We have children born addicted to drugs and in difficult home situations," he said. "Having Casey on staff allows her to have those meaningful conversations with the kids and help them work through their emotions."

With the warehouse renovations completed, the next project is an outdoor play area. "We want to create a safe environment for the kids to be outside," Tuten said. "Maybe have some box gardens and space to expand faith-based learning opportunities."



SERVING
106+
CHILDREN & TEENS

THE HAVEN

Demand Continues: The Haven Protects Women and Children from Abuse

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, violence against women has increased to record levels. Described as a “shadow pandemic,” extended isolation and lingering economic and social disruptions exacerbated an already concerning problem.

The National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice reports that domestic violence incidents in the U.S. are up by 8.1% following the 2020 lockdowns.

Michele Girtman, executive director of The Haven, said within the nine counties it serves, there was a 33% and 19% increase in domestic violence cases during 2020 and 2021, respectively.

“The isolation and stress of adults working from home caused many women and children to be locked inside with their abusers,” she said. “They couldn’t get out and go to the grocery store and see other people. With the kids not in school, counselors couldn’t observe them.”

While the masks are now down, domestic violence cases continue to rise. In 2022, The Haven served 631 new and 2,570 ongoing victims and responded to 1,900 crisis calls—a 71% increase in pre-pandemic crisis calls.

“COVID has given many people more of an awareness and heightened urgency about domestic violence and its long-term effects,” Girtman said. “I think we will continue to see the impact of COVID for the next 24 to 36 months.”

With 25 full-time staff and three facilities--a Battered Women’s Shelter, a Rape Crisis Center, and an Outreach office--The Haven provides basic life needs for the victims of family violence and sexual assault, including food, clothing, legal advocacy, mental health counseling,

and referrals for medical care. Other programs include community education and prevention awareness, financial assistance, and monthly community support groups for people who have endured domestic violence and sexual assault.

To prevent domestic violence and sexual assaults, The Haven conducted 264 education classes, including virtual presentations, to promote healthy relationships and risk awareness.

The Haven relies on the generosity of individual and corporate donors, grants, and an annual allocation from the Greater Valdosta United Way.

“We use 100 percent of our United Way allocation to match grants,” said Girtman, who has worked at The Haven for 15 years. “This means we can double and triple the money needed to provide housing, emergency shelter, and other direct services.”

Long-term plans include expanding the shelter’s kitchen, adding more bedrooms, and building a youth impact room.

“We are seeing more mothers coming into the shelter with children, especially teens, who often want to return to their normal lives,” said Girtman, who also serves as executive director of Magnolia House in Waycross. “Our shelter is temporary, and we have a playroom for small children but nothing for teens.”

The Mission

The Haven provides victims with the necessary information, resources, protected head start and supportive follow-up to transition out of a violent lifestyle and into successful independent living.

Currently Serving

- Atkinson County
- Berrien County
- Brooks County
- Clinch County
- Colquitt County
- Cook County
- Echols County
- Lanier County
- Lowndes County



THE
HAVEN

1,939
CRISIS CALLS

28,031
SERVICES
PROVIDED

6,721
BED NIGHTS

20,163
MEALS PROVIDED

135
SEXUAL ASSAULTS

631
NEW VICTIMS

2,570
ONGOING VICTIMS



PARTNERSHIP HEALTH CENTER

PATIENT VISITS
127,395

Providing Affordable Solutions for Uninsured Patients

In Georgia, 14.7% of the population lacks health insurance coverage. For many of these adults accessing healthcare can be a challenge.

The Partnership Health Center (PHC) opened a clinic in 2007 to provide health services for uninsured adults (18 to 64 years old) with income at or below 300% of the federal poverty guidelines. In Lowndes and surrounding counties, more than 50,000 adults qualify for PHC services.

With a staff of 30, including five full-time and four part-time medical providers, the PHC delivers primary and urgent care, pharmacy assistance, chronic disease management, telehealth visits, specialist referrals, and health education programs.

In 2022, the PHC provided almost 19,000 in-patient and telehealth visits and distributed over \$10 million in free medication.

“Even before COVID, we offered telehealth visits, and now they account for 20 to 25 percent of our patient visits,” said PHC Director John Sparks. “We rely heavily on telehealth because it allows remote patient monitoring,” which is especially useful for adults with limited transportation options.

The center receives an annual grant from South Georgia Medical Center, funding from the Greater Valdosta United Way, corporate and



PROVIDED
\$67,000,000
IN PRESCRIPTIONS
FROM 2007-2022

PROVIDED
\$85,000,000
IN MEDICAL SERVICES
FROM 2007-2022

individual donations, and patients pay a nominal \$15 per visit.

"Many uninsured adults don't have a primary care provider," Sparks said. "When they get sick, they often use the hospital emergency room. Once they are discharged from the ER or hospital, if they don't have a primary doctor, SGMC refers them to us. We provide medical follow-up, hopefully keeping them from returning to the hospital."

Sparks said PHC is grateful to SGMC for its continued financial support, which has been instrumental in expanding healthcare access to more uninsured adults in South Georgia.

"SGMC values the Partnership Health Center because it provides high-quality primary care that individuals need to stay healthy or manage their medical conditions," said Johnny Ball, SGMC senior vice president of regional hospital operations. "SGMC considers the resources it has invested with the center to be dollars well spent. Providing cost-effective, timely care is simply the right thing to do. It is part of SGMC's mission to serve people and improve overall community health."

The PHC became a GVUW nonprofit partner in 2021, receiving funds to offset medical and dental care costs for uninsured adults.

"The Greater Valdosta United Way not only provides needed funding for local nonprofit organizations but works hard to connect us with additional funding sources and connect us with one another so that we can serve those in need as a cohesive safety net," Sparks said.



Partnership for Health has provided more than 5,000 dental procedures to uninsured patients since it opened in 2007.

CAMP ROCK

Camp Rock is Providing Hope for Local Foster Families

Every foster child has their own unique story. For the more than 11,000 children in Georgia's foster care system, some need temporary care to return to their biological parents, while others are adopted into loving permanent homes.

Jay Watkins, Camp Rock founder, said they work closely with the Department of Family and Children Services to place children in foster homes and provide wraparound services for foster parents.

"We are here to help the foster family to make sure they receive the services and support they need," he said. "We also support the children's biological families. The goal is to return the children to a loving and stable home."

It's a harsh reality that life is not "normal" for foster children. Many children are uprooted from their homes because of abuse or neglect and placed in a home or facility. This can be a challenging experience for them.

Foster children often miss opportunities to experience everyday childhood activities, including attending camp.

At the Camp Rock facility in Lowndes County, foster and at-risk children participate in life-changing experiences in a Christian-centered environment, including week-long summer camps.

The 48-bed lodge is where the children stay overnight during the camps. Daytime activities include fishing in the large pond, participating in Bible studies, and enhancing their creative side through arts and crafts.

Throughout the spring and fall months, at-risk teens participate in Wilderness Camp. A nine-month program held one weekend each month, Wilderness Camp provides

horseback riding, gardening, and a chance for teens to gain employability skills that prepare them for future jobs.

"The statistics for foster children going to college are low, about 3 to 5 percent," said Watkins, recently appointed to the State Child Advocacy Board. "A large portion—about 20 percent—will end up homeless or incarcerated. So, we are trying to provide practical hands-on job skills."

Camp Rock is a nonprofit funded through donations and grants, including financial assistance from the Greater Valdosta United Way.

"The United Way has been a great partner for many years," Watkins said. "They have helped us purchase equipment like televisions for the classrooms and fund our camps so that more children can attend."

While the camp facilities are generally closed to the public, Watkins said the annual Christmas Lights at Camp Rock is becoming a South Georgia holiday favorite. The nearly one-mile drive-through lights display attracted more than 12,000 visitors in 2022.

At the low cost of \$15 per car, families enjoy holiday festivities, including live music, movie nights on the weekend, a live Nativity display, and plenty of games and activities.

Last year, Camp Rock completed its Valdosta Ministry Center, a mental health counseling facility for children and adults.

"Mental health is a crisis in South Georgia," Watkins said. "The newly opened center will specialize in working with family trauma."

MISSION

To influence the life circumstances of at-risk children so that they develop the life skills needed to fulfill the full potential of the life God has given them.



600+

**CHILDREN HAVE PARTICIPATED
IN CAMP ROCK'S SUMMER CAMPS**

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LEADER GIVERS

Celebrating a Record-Breaking Campaign

In October 2022, the Greater Valdosta United Way (GVUW) kicked off the Uniting for More annual campaign and quickly exceeded its \$1 million goal.

Not only did the GVUW reach 110% of its ambitious goal, but it did so in just six months through donations, pledges, and promises.

"It has been over a decade since we've achieved a campaign accomplishment of this magnitude," said GVUW President and CEO Michael Smith. "The outpouring of community support has been incredible, and now we can help even more individuals and families throughout South Georgia."

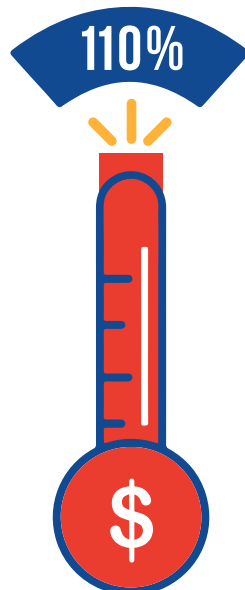
The funds will be distributed to GVUW partners and nonprofit organizations that help people meet basic needs and improve education, financial stability, and physical and mental health.

The GVUW's fundraising success was made possible through corporate support and more than \$306,000 from individual donors.

"I want to thank the Leader Giver committee for helping us achieve a record-breaking campaign," said Smith. "There are no small donations. Every gift makes a tremendous positive impact on our community."

2022 Leader Giver Committee

- Bill Cowart
- Angela Crance
- Johnny Dukes
- Russ Goodman
- Tom Kurrie, Jr.
- Beverly Langdale
- Jared McGahee
- Susan Swader



\$15,000+

TOCQUEVILLE SOCIETY

\$10,000 - \$14,999

UNITED SOCIETY

\$5,000 - \$9,999

CHAIRMAN'S CLUB

\$2,500 - \$4,999

DIRECTOR'S CLUB

\$2,000

AGENCY CLUB

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\$1,000 - \$2,000

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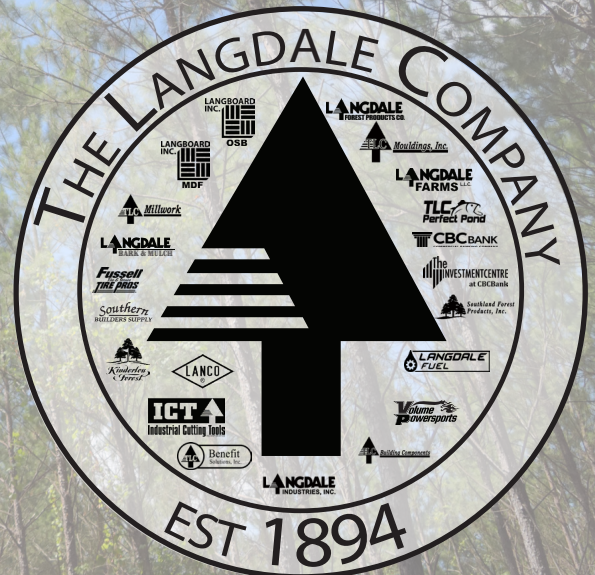
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