

# 2020-2021

# United Way

# Annual Report

United Way of  
West Georgia, Inc.



**LIVE UNITED™**  
**IT'S A WAY OF LIFE**

[unitedwaywga.org](http://unitedwaywga.org)

## LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

# Dear Friends,

*What a long strange year it has been! 2020 got off to a pretty unassuming start but took a wild turn in the middle of March. Thankfully, United Way of West Georgia had wrapped up our 2018-2019 campaign and we were about to make allocation funding decisions when COVID-19 made its appearance. Nothing has been the same, except that United Way has been here, serving the community as usual and supporting our partner organizations both financially and with encouragement and guidance.*

*Funding decisions were delayed for 2020, and partner agencies were funded at 2019 levels through June while we assessed what the effects of COVID-19 were going to be on the community. Obviously, some of our partners were forced to close for a period of time, while others like LaGrange Personal Aid, the Interfaith Food Closet and Salvation Army had to be creative in the way they provided services to continue to fill the large need for basic services in our community.*

*In May, the United Way of West Georgia, The Callaway Foundation and the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley announced the creation of the Troup County Emergency Relief Fund to raise funds to address the immediate and basic needs of economically vulnerable populations caused by loss of work or reduced wages, school and business closures, and the increased demand for healthcare information and support among our most vulnerable community members. Over \$161,000 was raised, which included a \$50,000 matching contribution from the Callaway Foundation. Grants were made through the fund to local 501(c)(3) organizations who were established in the community, and were prepared to distribute the funds to those affected financially by COVID. Our work was recognized by United Way Worldwide, who gave us a grant of \$20,000, as well as many generous individuals and organizations. A total of just over \$100,000 has been awarded as of December 31, 2020. Applications for funding can be requested through the United Way website: [www.unitedwaywga.org](http://www.unitedwaywga.org).*

*In September, time for our annual Campaign Kick-off, COVID-19 was still around, which called for some serious adjustments to our campaign. Thanks to Cedar Cross Media, Tommy Britt, from WellStar West Georgia Medical Center, and Shandaleia Shepherd, from Kimberly Clark, we were able to host a virtual campaign kick-off, and the campaign was off and running! On a sad note, however, we like many other organizations were forced to cancel our fund raising event, LaGrange Has Talent, in 2020. We are hopeful that by Fall of 2021 we will be able to bring it back.*

*This has definitely been an interesting year to say the least, but through it all, United Way has remained strong, and continued to serve the community. We are looking forward to what 2021 brings, but whatever it is, we will be here for you and our community.*

*Thank you for your contributions of time, talent and treasure to make our work possible.*



Roy Nichols  
Chair, Board of Directors  
United Way of West Georgia



Meredith Key  
Vice-Chair, Board of  
Directors



Patty Youngblood  
President  
United Way of West Georgia

## OUR VISION

We improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of the West Georgia communities serving Troup, Heard and Meriwether counties.

## OUR MISSION

We serve as the community's catalyst for improved education, health and income for West Georgia area citizens, and we serve as the lead community organization to enhance the capacity and ability of partner agencies to provide for basic human needs in the community.

## OUR VALUES

We value accountability, integrity, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and diversity, and we embrace our role as the philanthropy of choice in West Georgia.

### Treasurer's Report\*

#### Receipts

Current Year Revenues	\$944,458
Other Income	63,161
<u>Released from Reserves</u>	<u>61,534</u>
Total	\$1,069,153

#### Disbursements and Expenditures

Program Expenses	\$799,244
Fundraising	43,856
Other Expenses (LHT)	9,527
<u>Administration</u>	<u>216,526</u>
Total	\$1,069,153

\* January 1 – December 31, 2019

# What We Care About

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United Way builds stronger communities by identifying and implementing solutions that improve lives.  
We focus on local solutions to create lasting change by encouraging leaders and organizations from all sectors to work together.

United Way focuses on the big picture, creating a strategic network of programs meeting specific needs to create lasting social change.  
Our work unites like-minded programs and services to work together around key areas of need.  
We unite the community across sectors to provide innovative approaches to social change.

**The United Way focuses on improving outcomes in the following key areas:**

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## EDUCATION

When children and youth have strong, stable learning and growing environments, they can be more successful in achieving lifelong success and reaching their potential.

The emotional, social, physical and intellectual development of children directly affects the quality of adults they will become.

Together, we're providing quality early childhood education, afterschool programs, reading tutors, mentors, youth development programs, books for children, and more to ensure future generations are on a path toward success.

## BASIC NEEDS

Living in a financially stable household is a major determining factor in the level of education and future success of children.

Adults without a financially-sustaining income struggle to move forward in creating a good quality of life for themselves and their families.

We are working to assist people who are in personal financial crisis be able to have food, rent, utilities paid bill, or help with needed prescriptions to get them through the crisis and on the road to financial stability.

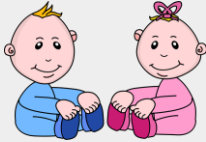







## HEALTH

Without good, stable health, people struggle to reach their full potential because of the increased financial burden and decreased time and ability for work, learning, and play.

Physical and mental health is a foundational requirement to a good quality of life.

Together, we're providing health assistance to people who need it most, including nutritional education, physical group classes, health screenings, and more to ensure the most vulnerable in our community are able to improve their health and well-being.

# United Way = Improved Education, Basic Needs and Health Throughout Life.

<p><b>Children</b> <i>Ages 0-5, pre-kindergarten</i></p> <p><b>We will be ready for kindergarten!</b></p> 	<p><b>Kids</b> <i>Ages 6-13, elementary &amp; middle school</i></p> <p><b>We will be ready for high school!</b></p> 	<p><b>Teens</b> <i>Ages 14-17, high school</i></p> <p><b>We will graduate from high school and be ready for college!</b></p> 	<p><b>Young Adults</b> <i>Ages 18-21, college &amp; technical studies</i></p> <p><b>We will graduate from college and be ready to start our careers!</b></p> 
<p><b>PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN INCLUDE:</b> Subsidized high quality daycare and access to age-appropriate books.</p>	<p><b>PROGRAMS FOR KIDS AND TEENS INCLUDE:</b> After school and school-break programs, including outdoor, educational, and athletic activities. One-on-one support and services for children and teens at risk or in need.</p>		<p><b>PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG ADULTS INCLUDE:</b> Opportunities to volunteer, contribute, and lead within the community.</p>
<p><b>Adults</b> <i>Ages 22-30, workforce entry</i></p> <p><b>We will be employed, productive, and ready for new opportunities!</b></p> 	<p><b>Parents</b> <i>Ages 31-65, child-rearing</i></p> <p><b>We will make a safe, stable, growing household for our children!</b></p> 	<p><b>Families &amp; Community</b> <i>Families are the core units of our community</i></p> <p><b>When our families thrive, our community thrives!</b></p> 	<p><b>Seniors</b> <i>Ages 65+, retirement</i></p> <p><b>We will be active, happy and stay connected to our community!</b></p> 
<p><b>PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS, PARENTS, AND FAMILIES INCLUDE:</b> Dignified relief for individuals and families who are overcoming disasters, trauma, emergencies, and personal misfortunes. Job skills training and other support that empower people to escape poverty and achieve financial and household stability.</p>			<p><b>PROGRAMS FOR SENIORS INCLUDE:</b> Recreational activities, volunteer opportunities, and support services to stay active and engaged.</p>

# Your 2021 United Way Team

At United Way of West Georgia, we work hard to ensure we remain a strong voice in your community by providing support and guidance to our partner agencies, transparency and accountability for our generous donors, and collaboration and leadership throughout the community.

Our board of directors, volunteers, and staff work closely together to ensure every action we take is in support of our mission to improve the lives of citizens in West Georgia.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

United Way of West Georgia's Board of Directors is, foremost, a guardian of values on behalf of its stakeholders. The board provides strategic leadership and vision through the creation of the strategic plan and policies.

### Executive Committee



**Roy Nichols**  
*Retired Educator*  
Chair, Board of  
Directors  
United Way of West  
Georgia



**Meredith Key**  
*The Veal Group*  
Vice-Chair, Board of  
Directors  
United Way of West  
Georgia



**Marty Pirrman**  
*Community Volunteer*  
Treasurer, Board of  
Directors  
United Way of West  
Georgia



**Mandy Hill**  
*Troup Family*  
Connections Auth.  
Secretary, Board of  
Directors  
United Way of West  
Georgia



**Rhonda Mitchell**  
*Interface*  
Past Chair, Board of  
Directors  
United Way of West  
Georgia



**Renae Willis**  
*President,*  
*Magnolia Society*  
Board of Directors  
United Way of  
West Georgia



**John Asbell**  
*Georgia Power*  
At-Large, Board of  
Directors  
United Way of West  
Georgia



**Brent Matthews**  
*Hutchinson-Traylor*  
At-Large, Board of  
Directors  
United Way of West  
Georgia



**Bill Stump**  
*Community Bank &  
Trust*  
At-Large, Board of  
Directors  
United Way of West  
Georgia



## Board of Directors



**John Beyers**  
First United  
Methodist  
Church



**Patrick Bowers**  
Duracell



**Curtis Brown**  
Build the Crowd,  
LLC



**Jan Edwards**  
WellStar West  
Georgia



**Kathleen Ernest**  
Retired  
Occupational  
Therapist



**Coleman Foss**  
WellStar West  
GA Medical  
Center



**Drew Gay**  
Synovus  
Investments



**Chase Hall**  
CenterState  
Bank



**Connie Hensler**  
LaGrange  
Chamber of  
Commerce



**David Higgins**  
Higgins  
LaGrange  
Chapel



**Megan Hudson**  
Spinks Brown  
Durand Realty



**Henry Hutchinson**  
Mobis



**Kyle Lovejoy**  
Roberts and  
Lovejoy, PC



**Erin Meeks**  
Hometown  
Physicians



**Dana Shumate**  
Shumate  
Consulting



**Stewart Smith**  
Troup Co.  
Sheriff's Dept.



**Kelvin Thomas**  
Enrichment  
Services  
Program



**Ley Wynne**  
LaGrange  
Police Dept.

## Staff

United Way of West Georgia staff work tirelessly to execute the strategic plan laid out by the board, collaborating with our partner agencies, volunteers, community leaders, and donors to reach our goals.



**Patty Youngblood**  
President, United  
Way of West  
Georgia



**Sharon Alford**  
VP Finance &  
Resource  
Development,  
United Way of  
West Georgia



**Barbara Harris**  
Office Manager,  
United Way of  
West Georgia



**Gail Gordon**  
Success by 6  
Coordinator,  
United Way of  
West Georgia

# 2020-2021 Fundraising Campaign



**Join Us**  
**United Way**  
*Virtual*  
**Campaign Kickoff**  
**October 7, 2020**  
**2:00 p.m. (EST)**

Facebook Live!

**United Way of West Georgia, Inc.** **United Way** 

**LIVE UNITED™**  
**IT'S A WAY OF LIFE**



**2020 Campaign Kickoff Co-Anchors**

**Goal:**  
**\$1,000,000**

The Campaign Kickoff took on a whole new dimension in 2020. With COVID-19 still around, we went to a virtual format featuring Shandaleia Shephard, from Kimberly Clark and Tommy Britt, from Wellstar WGMC serving as Co-Anchors for the production. This year's campaign theme was: LIVE UNITED, It's a Way of Life!

The Virtual Kickoff featured a few Executive Directors of United Way Partner Agencies. First was Dan Wooten, Executive Director of the Active Life Centers in LaGrange, Hogansville and West Point. Dan described the various activities available at the Active Life Centers. He emphasized how everything they do at the centers is designed to keep seniors active, healthy and independent for as long as possible. Paul Stedman, from LaGrange Personal Aid and Interfaith Food Closet was the next featured speaker. He explained how LaGrange Personal Aid can change lives by helping people out of financial emergencies with rent and utility assistance, as well as many other types of aid. He also talked about providing food for those in need. Michele Bedingfield from Harmony House was the final guest speaker. She talked about the services Harmony House provides for those in a domestic violence situation, as well as some of the preventive services they provide. All three directors spoke to the need for supporting United Way financially in our community because one contribution impacts all 25 United Way partner agencies.



# United Way Seal of Approval

Our partner agencies are some of the best nonprofits in West Georgia.

Held to the highest standards, each of our agencies works toward a specific mission to improve quality of life for West Georgia citizens. Vigorously vetted by our loyal volunteers yearly, our partner agencies run programs that deliver real results, improving real lives each day.



Hogansville Active Life



LaGrange Active Life



American Red Cross



Boy Scouts  
Chattahoochee Council



Boys and Girls Club



CASA, Troup



Children's Advocacy Center, Troup



Communities in Schools, Troup



Empty Stocking Fund, Hogansville



Empty Stocking Fund, LaGrange



Foster Grandparents



Girl Scouts, Greater Atlanta



Good Shepherd Therapeutic Center



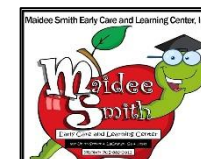
Harmony House



Interfaith Food



Literacy Volunteers



Maidee Smith Early Care and Learning



LaGrange Personal Aid



Salvation Army



Self Help Harbor



Senior Companions



Special Olympics



Active Life West Point



Success by Six

# Funded Partner Agencies

The Community Care Fund supports essential education, income and health services in West Georgia.

Grants are awarded annually by qualified volunteers to these highly vetted community organizations after a review that includes community impact, program design, financial capacity and operating performance.

**In 2020, the UW of West Georgia Community Care Fund invested \$702,067 directly into the following highly impactful organizations:**

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[Active Life Center, Hogansville](#) The Active Life program provides a recreation campus and services for older adults that enhances quality of life, encourages independence and extends lifespan.

[Active Life Center, LaGrange](#) The Active Life program provides a recreation campus and services for older adults that enhances quality of life, encourages independence and extends lifespan. A Troup Council of Aging program.

[Active Life Center, West Point](#) The Active Life program provides a recreation campus and services for older adults that enhances quality of life, encourages independence and extends lifespan.

[American Red Cross of Central Midwest Georgia](#) Provides education, preparedness, assistance and other services that prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies and disasters.

[Boy Scouts of America - Chattahoochee Council](#) Provides fun, educational experiences that instill values in young boys and prepares them to make critical choices over their lifetime in achieving their full potential.

[Boys & Girls Club of West Georgia](#) Provides daily after-school and school-break activities that enable all young people (especially those who need it most) to realize their full potential as responsible, productive, caring citizens.

[CASA of Troup County](#) Provides screened, trained, supervised adult advocates who represent the best interest of abused and neglected children involved in juvenile dependency proceedings.

[Children's Advocacy Center of Troup County](#) Provides facilities, multi-disciplinary teams, and coordinated systems that minimize trauma to child abuse victims during investigations.

[Communities in Schools of Troup County](#) Provides case management, mentoring, tutoring, enrichment programs and other services that surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

[Empty Stocking Fund, Hogansville](#) Provides toys and gifts to children and families in need at Christmas, promoting a sense of "caring and sharing" to our future community leaders.

[Empty Stocking Fund, LaGrange](#) Provides toys and gifts to children and families in need at Christmas, promoting a sense of "caring and sharing" to our future community leaders.

[Foster Grandparents Program](#) Connects seniors with meaningful volunteer opportunities with children in care centers, schools and other agencies, which makes a difference in the lives of both children and volunteers.

[Girl Scouts of Greater Atlanta](#) Provides fun, educational experiences that build courage, confidence and character in young girls to help them succeed in school and life.

[Good Shepherd Center of Georgia Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries](#) Provides residential, on-campus education and other services for adolescent boys coping with the effects of abuse, neglect, abandonment and other related issues.

[Harmony House Domestic Violence Shelter](#) Provides emergency shelter, crisis intervention, education, and advocacy for adults and children who are victims of domestic violence.

[Interfaith Food Closet](#) Provides temporary and emergency food, baby items and personal care items to people in need.

[LaGrange Personal Aid Association](#) Provides financial and other assistance to people during times of distress, illness, disability, or financial difficulty.

[Literacy Volunteers of Troup County](#) Recruits, trains and supports volunteers to tutor adults needing to improve their English, math and computer literacy skills.

[Maidee Smith Early Care & Learning Center](#) Provides safe, affordable, age-appropriate quality childcare and early childhood education.

[Salvation Army](#) Provides financial assistance for rent and utilities to people in emergency situations.

[Self Help Harbor](#) Provides a safe, secure place for all 12-step addiction recovery programs to meet.

[Senior Companions Program](#) Provides volunteer service opportunities for active low-income seniors that builds self-esteem and contributes to their mental and physical well-being by helping at-risk elderly maintain their independent status and remain in their homes.

[Special Olympics, Troup County](#) Provides sports training and competitions for people with intellectual disabilities, giving them opportunities to be active citizens in our community.

[Success by Six](#) Provides leadership, resources and services that ensure children enter school better prepared to learn.

# United Way Initiatives



The mission of **Success by 6** is to ensure that children in West Georgia enter school better prepared to learn.

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We are a community partnership focused on improving school readiness through a strong network of public and private resources. We collaborate with school districts, child development centers, community organizations, local government and others to promote the healthy development of all children from conception through age five.

Everything we do at **Success by 6** is in pursuit of one of the following goals:

- \* Increase awareness of the importance early learning plays in school readiness \*
- \* Improve the quality of education provided at child care centers \*
- \* Ensure all young children have books in their home and are read to daily \*
- \* Help parents realize they are their child's first teacher and assist them in being the best teacher possible \*

We work towards these goals through a number of fantastic programs, however, the Coronavirus made the execution of some of these programs impossible during 2020.

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**Weekly Class:** Normally from September to May, we host a weekly class for children and parents focused around a different letter of the alphabet. Due to COVID-19 classes have been discontinued since March of 2020.

**Summer PLAY:** In 2020, this summer program was cancelled due to COVID-19, in 2021 Success By 6 will be providing literacy resources to four Early Learning Centers for their summer programs through an initiative called Summer Play on Wheels.

**Weekly Readers:** Since March 2020, Weekly Readers have not been able to go into Early Learning Centers to read to the students. Some volunteers read through Zoom. The LaGrange Youth City Council took on Early Literacy and with the help of the PR department at the City of LaGrange eleven students read and recorded 55 books. They put the videos on a United Way Success By Six YouTube channel for all to enjoy.

**Childcare Mentorship:** We work to provide support to the director and staff of Maidee Smith Early Care and Learning Center by visiting weekly, providing activities, ideas and suggestions, and modeling teaching strategies. The in person visits to Maidee Smith had to be suspended mid-March of 2020 due to the virus, but emails, texts, and phone calls have continued plus materials and books have been dropped off.

**Book Distribution:** Even though COVID-19 changed the way books were distributed, we found creative ways and partnerships to continue to safely get books into the homes of children. For example, books were distributed weekly through the Troup County School System feeding sites at local elementary schools and a partnership was formed with the Calumet Neighborhood. We are always looking for more ways to share books with as many children as possible; even with COVID-19, over 4700 books were given to children in Troup County during 2020!

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Each year, **Success by 6** expands outreach in the community. As we look forward to 2021, we continue to actively pursue opportunities to reach, engage, and educate more and more children and parents in West Georgia.

# Volunteers

Our amazing volunteers make our work possible. With the talent of the diverse community members who contribute their time to United Way and our partner agencies, we are able to reach more individuals and transform more lives.

## PARTNER ALLOCATION PANELS

Each year, our panel volunteers visit each of our partner agencies to learn about their programs, hear how United Way can be helpful, and critically assess and evaluate their funding requests. These panels are vital to our allocation process, providing accountability and insight to our donors. 2021 brought a new set of challenges to the process. Thanks to COVID-19, all site visits were conducted virtually.

### ALLOCATION CHAIRMAN

**Marty Pirrman**

### PANEL CHAIRS

John Asbell

Kathleen Ernest

Brent Matthews

Rhonda Mitchell

Roy Nichols

Bill Stankiewicz

Renae Willis

Pat Barton

Cassandra S. Battle

Matheu Cook

KeJuana Drake

Megan Duke

Drew Gay

Diane Harrell

Connie Hensler

Megan Hudson

Lee Jones

D. Lindner

Kriss Lindner

Cheryl Magby

Dave Marler

Allison McClendon

Luther Parks

Barry Ponder

Stewart Smith

Kelvin Thomas

## Weekly Readers

*Due to the Coronavirus, in 2020, our readers were not able to go into the Early Learning Centers as they usually do. We are hopeful that when school starts Fall of 2021, Covid rules will be relaxed and volunteers will be welcome in the centers again.*

Typically, our readers go into early learning centers, including Maidee Smith Early Care and Learning Center; Teaching, Loving, Caring Learning Center; Pride and Joy Daycare Center; Happy Days; and Yvette's Little World.

Each reader shares a book, discusses a career with the children, and talks about what they want to do when they graduate from high school. With an influx of new readers in 2019, we were reaching more children than ever.

## READING PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Gail Gordon

### 2019-2020 PROGRAM MEMBERS

Mike Angstadt

Connie Askew

Debbie Atkins

Bridget Barber

Michelle Bedingfield

Ed Biggs

Sondra Bowie

Clara Brown

Sherri Brown

Kate Chambers

Richard Ennis

Kathleen Ernest

Jerry Fulks

Gail Gordon

Zsa Zsa Heard

George Henry

Clark Johnson

Debbie Jones

Judge Michael Key

David King

Carole Linch

Kelly Linch

Judge Jeannette Little

Kathy Matthews

Connie Olinger

Josh O'Neal

Tripp Penn

Keith Schuerman

Joanne Selby

Cathy Stout

Genie Sutton

Troup Co. Sheriff's Dept.

Pam Vaughn

Patty Youngblood



The purpose of the WLC shall be to adopt a “signature issue” that becomes its cause, which helps to improve that community’s education, financial stability or health outcomes and aligns with the mission and strategies of United Way of West Georgia.

The current signature issue is the support of early learning programs for school readiness.

A band of women - rooted together by a common foundation –  
branching out, promoting strength in their community.

## LEADERSHIP

### Executive Committee:

**Rena Willis** ~ Chair • **Debbie Burdette** ~ Vice-Chair • **Charis Acree** ~ Secretary • **Meredith Key** ~ Past-Chair  
**Patty Youngblood** ~ CEO, President of United Way • **Sharon Alford** ~ VP of Finance and Resource Development

### Committees:

**Mandy Hill** ~ Grant Committee Chair • **Kathleen Ernest** ~ Signature Issue Awareness Chair • **Gail Gordon** ~ Signature Issue Awareness Vice-Chair  
**Dana Shumate** ~ Signature Issue Awareness At-Large • **Melissa Miller** ~ Signature Issue Fundraising Chair •  
**Leslie Schwartz** ~ Signature Issue Fundraising At-Large • **Stephanie Preston** ~ Membership Chair • **Kim Burch** ~ Membership Vice-Chair  
**Nicole Smith** ~ Membership At-Large • **Barbara Harris** ~ Communications Chair • **Becca Eiland** ~ Communications Vice-Chair • **Megan Penn** ~ Communications At-Large



# Focus Issue: Early Childhood Education

In addition to supporting our 25 partner agencies around each of their individual missions, we also work to provide opportunities for collaboration across agencies, making the work of each more impactful. While looking for unique ways to increase impact, the need for action around early childhood education and school readiness became clear.

Children in West Georgia are reaching kindergarten with vastly different experiences—some completely ready to learn and others without exposure to basic ideas such as colors, shapes and letters.

With so much of a child's brain development happening before the age of five, it's critical to reach children and parents as early as possible and in as many ways as possible. United Way of West Georgia is playing an important role in leading much-needed community change around early childhood education.

Magnolia Society volunteers have raised funds, over \$130,000 in six years, for early childhood education through annual events, first Merry Market and most recently LaGrange Has Talent. Five years ago, we asked these committed volunteers to come together to create a Women's Leadership Council, creating more structured and ongoing opportunities to raise awareness around early childhood education. Our Women's Leadership Council, the *Magnolia Society*, has brought together a diverse group of women to raise funds in support of early childhood education and to lead the community in taking action.

In West Georgia, there is a striking lack of understanding of how critical the first five years of a child's life are to their ongoing education. A child's brain develops 80% of its capacity by the time he or she reaches the age of three. By five, the brain has developed to 90% of its capacity. Many parents don't realize how important it is for them to read to, sing to and talk to their young children. They assume education starts in kindergarten, when in actuality, it needs to start at birth.

If a child enters kindergarten behind, their chances of reading on grade level by third grade are much slimmer. If that child isn't reading on grade level by third grade, they are four times less likely to graduate from high school.

In 2019, a group of dedicated community leaders who had formed Get Troup Reading, attended a Get Georgia Reading Summit. Get Georgia Reading is a partner of the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading, which focuses on ensuring that children are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade. The Summit was very energizing and this group decided to bring a similar event to LaGrange. They began by holding a stakeholder's meeting to gauge the interest in the community and finding a lot of support they went on to organize the first Get Troup Reading Summit. The local summit was held on February 8, 2020 and hosted over 125 people. There were state level experts as well as local professionals who presented at the Summit. Speakers included Arianne Weldon, Executive Director of Get Georgia Reading, Garry McGiboney with the Georgia Department of Education, Representative Randy Nix, Judge Michael Key and Troup County Superintendent, Brian Shumate, TCSS Assistant Principal, Deanna Brown and Point University Professor Lacey Sutherland. The summit was free of charge and attendees who were Early Learning Center teachers, directors or Pre-K teachers received 4 hours of continuing education credits.

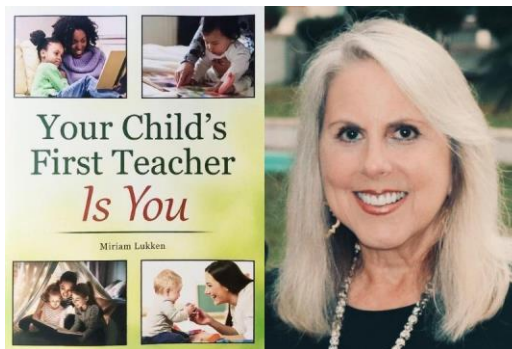
Interest in Get Troup Reading continued to grow, and in May of 2020, Kim Myers was hired as the Director of the program. There are now three working committees – Healthy Babies and Toddlers which focuses on Pre-natal to 3 year olds; School Readiness, focuses on three and four year olds; and School Success focuses on Kindergarten through third grade. Volunteers are needed for all of the committees. To get involved call the United Way office at 706-884-8292 or Get Troup Reading at 706-302-9888.



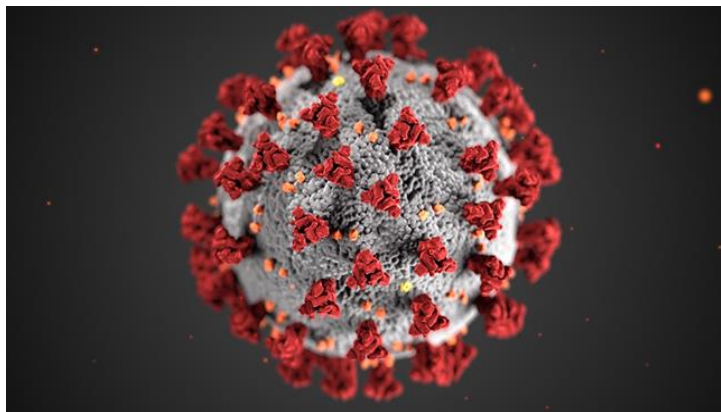
LaGrange Has Talent was cancelled in 2020,  
but will return November 18, 2021.

Early Learning efforts continued to be provided throughout 2020 made possible through the proceeds of previous years.

- Over 5,000 books were distributed throughout the community at schools when the lunches were picked up, at community events, delivered to Little Free Libraries and were taken to Early Learning Centers.
- Also in 2020, The Magnolia Society, United Way Women's Leadership Council, served as a conduit for the publication and distribution of Miriam Lukken's Book. Copies are available in the United Way office.



# Troup County Emergency Relief Fund



In March 2020, when the Coronavirus really arrived on the scene and started making big changes in our lives, many local United Ways began creating funds to allow them to assist those who had been most affected in their communities. The United Way of West Georgia began conversations with The Callaway Foundation and the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley about creating such a fund for Troup County. The Callaway Foundation pledged a \$50,000 match for the first \$50,000 raised.

In May of 2020, the Troup County Emergency Relief Fund was launched on the United Way website. This provided individuals and businesses a way to contribute to the fund and for 501(c)(3) organizations to apply for grants to assist the most vulnerable in our community who were being affected by the Coronavirus.

The generosity of the community was amazing. In addition to many generous individuals, the fund received contributions from Truist Financial Foundation, the United Way of West Georgia, The Charter Foundation, the LaGrange Rotary Club, Georgia Power, United Way Worldwide, the Troup County Center for Strategic Planning and the generous Callaway Foundation match. In all, the Fund raised over \$161,000 by the end of the year.

The Grant Committee for the Fund made their first grant awards on May 15, 2020. As of December 31, 2020, just over \$100,000 in grants have been awarded to 17 local organizations. Through these organizations rent, utilities, food, PPEs, air purifiers, sponsoring a blood drive, setting up telehealth equipment and much more have been provided for those in Troup County who have been most adversely impacted by the consequences of the Coronavirus. As of January 1, 2021, there are still funds available for additional grants see [www.unitedwaywga.org](http://www.unitedwaywga.org) for information.

# How You Can Help

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## **GIVE:**

99 cents of every dollar donated to United Way stays in our local community, where it funds programs carefully chosen by community volunteers.

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## **ADVOCATE:**

Advocate for those in need by growing your knowledge of current issues impacting our community.

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## **VOLUNTEER:**

We could not do this work without volunteers who help us serve the community. In 2020, more than 1531 volunteers gave more than 18,582,413 hours in service to others through the United Way of West Georgia and our Partner Agencies.

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## **STAY INFORMED:**

Follow us on social media, stay up-to-date, and get involved in the conversations that benefit families in your local community!



*Facebook.com/UnitedWayWGA*

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**NEED HELP? WE'RE HERE FOR YOU.**

CALL US AT: 706-884-8292

We can let you know what community resources are available  
and connect you with folks who can help.



**United Way of West Georgia**

[unitedwaywga.org](http://unitedwaywga.org)

200 Main Street, LaGrange, GA 30240

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