



The Black Belt Bulletin

A COMPILATION: DECEMBER 2022 - DECEMBER 2023





What is the Black Belt Bulletin?

In December of 2022, the BBCF Data Impact Center was formed to spearhead BBCF's newest information product known as the Black Belt Bulletin. The Bulletin is a bi-weekly newsletter produced by the Communications Team operating as the 'BBCF Data Impact Center' to bring interest and awareness to the initiatives and programs BBCF supports. This data-driven and visually polished product is allowing BBCF to get the stories of its work out in a new way that connects to community stakeholders and new audiences while simultaneously creating informational resource value for BBCF networks. The Bulletin is a central resource that is distributed via print, e-newsletter, and is permanently available on BBCF's website.

blackbeltfound.org/bbcf-bulletin

Please note: Issues 10-14 were produced as a 5-part special insert series published through the Selma Sun Newspaper. Each week, they featured a story that spotlighted BBCF storm recovery grantees. On the flipside of each insert, BBCF published one of our special edition Black Belt Bulletins covering a larger playing field of BBCF's work. Three of these issues were original, new content and two issues were reprints of earlier issues of the Bulletin. The two reprinted issues are not included in this compilation.

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Thank you to our Community Associates for their hard work and dedication, ensuring the BBCF continues to provide resources and initiatives that will improve the lives of the residents in the 12 Black Belt counties we serve.



The Black Belt Community Foundation

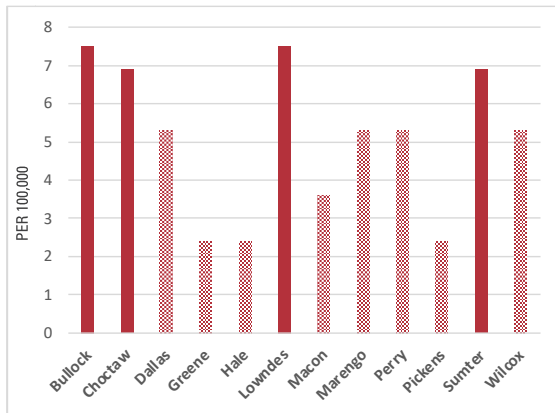
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The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 1 | DECEMBER 2022 | IMPACT ON HEALTHCARE



According to a recent report by the CDC, 11 of the 12 Black Belt counties served by the BBCF are ranked among the top 50 for having the highest rates of COVID-19 per 100,000 population in the United States.



COVID-19 Hospital Admissions Rates for the 12 Black Belt Counties as of 2022 (per 100,000 population)

AVERAGE PATIENT TO CLINICIAN RATIO IN BLACKBELT COUNTIES (PER YEAR)

1,200 PATIENTS

to

1 CLINICIAN



The H.O.P.E. Grant

The Black Belt Community Foundation (BBCF) has been awarded a **Health, Outreach, Promotion and Education (H.O.P.E.)** grant to advance Black health equity in the Black Belt region. According to a recent report by the CDC, eleven of the twelve Black Belt counties served by the BBCF are ranked among the top 50 for having the highest rates of COVID-19 per 100,000 population in the United States. According to BBCF President, Felecia Lucky (photo on right), "The Black Belt H.O.P.E. Ambassador Project is an outgrowth of the Black Belt COVID-19 Task force, a coalition of local political and community leaders who designed a regional approach to help access critical resources as well as address the issues of Black health in Black Belt counties. The disproportionate impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the region led the BBCF to apply for the H.O.P.E. grant, through which we will collaborate with the Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama Workforce Development Councils, and the University of Alabama School of Medicine, among others."

The H.O.P.E. grant will create and equip a network of local community leaders and organizations to build capacity, provide needed information, and develop a sustainable infrastructure to create a pathway for improved health advocacy.



The Black Belt H.O.P.E. Ambassador Project will recruit and train "Ambassadors" to educate residents on the importance of vaccinations and boosters and help them understand why testing and responding to contact tracer calls are critical for decreasing cases of COVID-19 community spread. "BBCF's unique role is apparent as a helpful and trusted connector across communities. Our ability to connect while listening, networking, harnessing, and amplifying local resources fuels our singular approach to create real opportunity through our vision of transformation in Alabama's Black Belt", according to Chris Spencer (photo on left), BBCF Chief Engagement Officer. BBCF is currently hiring and onboarding 24 Ambassadors (two for each county) who will lead the work in increasing health literacy, vaccination rates, and testing in Bullock, Choctaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, and Wilcox counties. BBCF H.O.P.E. project directors in charge of operations are Samantha Ledbetter and Wendell H. Paris. Once Ambassadors are onboarded, directors will begin implementing the community engagement strategies. Supplies, including PPE, will be provided through the Ambassadors to residents who will be visited in rural underserved communities. (Photos courtesy of Intown Imagery)



Counties served by BBCF through the H.O.P.E. grant:

- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Bullock | Greene | Macon | Pickens |
| Choctaw | Hale | Marengo | Sumter |
| Dallas | Lowndes | Perry | Wilcox |





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ISSUE 2 | JANUARY 2023 | FOCUS ON TRHT



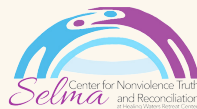
TRHT

Truth, Racial Healing, & Transformation

TRHT is a comprehensive, national and community-based process to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, and to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism. **TRHT Selma** was initiated in Selma in May 2017 with the Black Belt Community Foundation established as a TRHT grantee by funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.



BBCF has joined forces with the Selma Center for Nonviolence as their programmatic place partner to implement the TRHT process for Selma and Dallas County.



FIVE MAIN FOCAL AREAS

- 1 Narrative change:**
How to create a more complete and accurate narrative that will help people understand how racial hierarchy has been embedded in our society.
- 2 Racial healing & relationship-building:**
How all of us can heal from the wounds of the past and build mutually respectful relationships across racial and ethnic lines.
- 3 Separation/segregation:**
How to dismantle and transform the laws, policies, structures, habits and biases that created and sustain separation.
- 4 Economy:**
How to remove the structured inequality and barriers to economic opportunities, and develop solutions that will create a more equitable society.
- 5 Law:**
How the community recognizes the historical significance our system of law has played in perpetuating the hierarchy of human value.

TRHT Innovation in the Black Belt

In response to needs identified through the Dallas County Area Study, TRHT Selma is working to launch an innovation center to serve as a hub for transformation in Selma, Alabama. The 2020-2021 Study was led by Dr. Sekou Franklin of Middle Tennessee State University and designed to measure resource availability and attitudes related to financial mobility across Dallas County. **The innovation center will offer residents and tourists alike the chance to envision, support, and experience an economically transforming Selma.** Located directly adjacent to the Ancient Africa, Slavery, and Civil War Museum in downtown Selma, the innovation center will house two merchandise showrooms, a community classroom space, and co-working facilities.

The innovation center will exemplify our theory of change by tackling the work of changing hearts and minds for the better as we increase access to resources related to improving material conditions across our community. Transformation Coaches will specialize in walking step-by-step with members of the innovation center to define and create a success plan as well as help address challenges to success as they occur. Partnerships with entities including Hope Credit Union, Lifelines Counseling, and the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America will offer local residents the opportunity to improve their quality of life for families regardless of income or experience. Events like the upcoming "I Have a Dream" Vision Board Experience for Entrepreneurs invite those with business ideas or growing businesses to become connected to the innovation center. To learn more about the innovation center, follow the progress, and support its development, log onto TRHTSelma.org.

"The Innovation Center will exemplify our theory of change by tackling the work of changing hearts and minds for the better as we increase access to resources related to improving material conditions across our community." – Lydia Chatmon, Director of TRHT for BBCF



Upcoming TRHT Events

JAN 14

THE "I HAVE A DREAM" VISION BOARD EXPERIENCE FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS
Saturday at 11:00AM
Register: bit.ly/BizVision2023

JAN 16

MLK DAY OF SERVICE CLOTHING & WINTER WEAR GIVEAWAY
Monday 11:30AM - 1:00PM
Contact: admin@selmacntr.org

JAN 17

NATIONAL DAY OF RACIAL HEALING: VOICES OF OUR HISTORY
Tuesday at 5:30PM
1400 Water Avenue, Selma, AL

JAN 19

VIRTUAL RACIAL EQUITY TRAINING
Thursday at 10:30AM
Register: bit.ly/racialequityvirtual



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ISSUE 3 | JANUARY 31, 2023 | FOCUS ON STORM SHELTERS



Storm Shelter Initiative

In 2022, the BBCF awarded non-profit organizations in four Alabama counties \$30,000 each to build storm shelters to serve the residents of their communities. Greene, Hale, Marengo and Pickens counties were the beneficiaries of this donation. In addition, BBCF submitted a state grant application to supplement the Storm Shelter Initiative fund. On August 3, 2022, BBCF was awarded a Governor’s Emergency Relief Fund Grant to provide an additional \$88,000 to their Storm Shelter Initiative in the four counties. The target and priority groups for the shelters will be homeless individuals, residents living in mobile homes and those living in substandard housing. A total of six shelters will be built to accommodate residents who otherwise would be vulnerable to the elements. Shelter foundations have been built and the shelters are scheduled for completion at the end of February 2023.



–BBCF RELIEF RESPONSE– SELMA-WEST ALABAMA TORNADO



On Thursday, January 12, a high-end EF2 tornado caused devastating damage to the city of Selma and numerous counties in West Alabama. In local neighborhoods, the power of the tornado was so forceful that it caused roofs to be lifted off of homes and left communities filled with debris. According to the Associated Press, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey toured Selma in the aftermath and stated, “It was far worse than anything I had envisioned or seen on television. Roofs are just gone and trees look like toothpicks.”

The Black Belt Community Foundation immediately established two funds to support the rebuilding of these communities. To assist Dallas, Greene, Hale, Marengo, Perry, and Sumter Counties, the BBCF established Communities Helping Communities Disaster Relief Fund. In order to help the city of Selma and Dallas County residents, the BBCF set up the Selma Recovery Fund in partnership with Selma Mayor James Perkins. The BBCF encourages individuals, organizations, businesses and others to donate to these funds to bring urgently needed relief to these communities.

To donate to these disaster relief funds, please visit:
blackbeltfound.org/2023-disaster-relief-funds/

TORNADOES MOST DEADLY IN ALABAMA

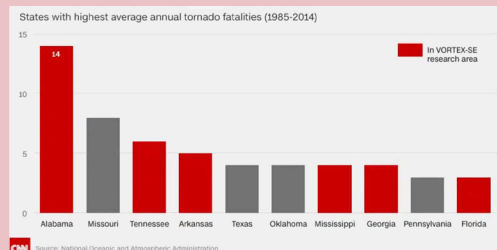
Research has shown that Alabama’s **high poverty rate**, as well as the prevalence of mobile homes in the state, may be the biggest factors in explaining why Alabama’s tornado death toll keeps climbing.

14

Average # of tornado deaths per year in AL
HIGHEST IN NATION

633

Tornado fatalities in AL between 1950-2016
MOST OF ANY STATE





The Black Belt Bulletin



WHAT IS BROADBAND?

The term broadband commonly refers to high-speed Internet access that is always on and faster than the traditional dial-up access. Broadband internet is delivered through several different technologies with varying availability based on location.

Why is broadband access so important?

Education



Broadband networks enhance educational experiences by providing students and teachers access to an array of online resources. Broadband access also allows students to participate in distance learning opportunities at any time from any location they can access the internet.

Healthcare



Broadband makes remote access to clinical services possible for patients and provides significantly improved, cost-effective access to quality health care. It also allows physicians to monitor their patients through innovative home health devices.

Public Safety



Broadband, particularly wireless broadband, is becoming increasingly indispensable to the interoperability of police, fire, health and other government entities. This includes rapid disaster response systems, effective early warning and public alert systems, and disaster preparation programs.

Economic Development



Broadband enables local communities, regions and nations to develop, attract, retain and expand job-creating businesses and institutions. It also improves the productivity and profitability of large, small and home-based businesses and allows them to compete in local, national and global markets.

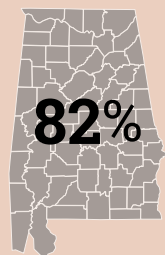
Broadband in the Black Belt

In today's world, affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet access has never been more important, yet many homes in Alabama's Black Belt Region lack sufficient connectivity. Both availability and affordability contribute to significant gaps in broadband coverage in these Black Belt cities making them unable to support the long-term goals related to workforce, healthcare, economic development and education. To achieve these goals, high-quality, resilient, and future-proof Internet service must be fully accessible to every resident.

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) is working to achieve full Broadband access in the state over the next few years. ADECA has held a series of meetings with local leaders and citizens to produce insights and the data needed to build broadband planning and deployment capacity. According to Marcus Campbell, chair of the Sumter County Commission, "Alabama will receive 181 million dollars throughout the course of 2024-25 where internet service providers can apply for these funds and provide services to make sure every citizen in Sumter county who wants Broadband will be able to have it. Alabama Power and a team at the University of West Alabama (UWA) have been working together to get connectivity to all of their citizens", states Campbell. [UWA recently received a \$1.65 million federal grant to train residents about digital skills and increase broadband access for residents of Sumter and Greene counties.] Sumter County Commissioner Drucilla Russ-Jackson (District 1) said "the Broadband expansion will help schools and economic development". The Association of County Commissions of Alabama voted to make Broadband access their number one priority for the upcoming year.

If you live in rural Alabama, please consider taking the internet speed survey at the link below to help us locate gaps in broadband service:
broadband.alabama.gov/speed-test/

Alabama Broadband Internet Subscriptions (2017-2021)



82% of Alabamians have access to high-speed internet (on avg.)

Several counties in the Alabama Black Belt are well below the state average for percentage of residents with subscriptions to broadband internet (Note: Some residents have access to internet but cannot afford an ongoing subscription fee)

Greene	Lowndes	Perry	Bullock
55.8%	55.8%	57.3%	59.4%





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ISSUE 5 | MARCH 1, 2023 | IMPACT ON HEALTH EQUITY



H.O.P.E. Ambassadors have recently completed surveys and handed out COVID19 informational flyers at several locations in Pickens and Sumter counties.

150+

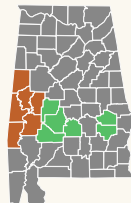
Regional partnerships established through H.O.P.E. Grant

Documented contacts with H.O.P.E. Grant county residents

3.5k

Project Directors, **Samantha Ledbetter** and **Wendell H. Paris** serve the following counties through the H.O.P.E. grant:

- Choctaw
- Greene
- Hale
- Marengo
- Pickens
- Sumter
- Bullock
- Dallas
- Lowndes
- Macon
- Perry
- Wilcox



Update on the H.O.P.E. Grant

To recap, The Black Belt Community Foundation (BBCF) was awarded a Health, Outreach, Promotion and Education (H.O.P.E.) grant to advance Black health equity in the Black Belt region. BBCF H.O.P.E. Project Directors in charge of operations are Samantha Ledbetter and Wendell H. Paris. Director Ledbetter serves communities in Choctaw, Greene, Hale, Marengo, Pickens, and Sumter counties. Director Paris serves communities in Bullock, Dallas, Lowndes, Macon, Perry, and Wilcox counties.

One of the first tasks was the creation of the H.O.P.E. Ambassador Project which is an outgrowth of the Black Belt COVID-19 task force, a coalition of local political and community leaders who designed a regional approach to help access critical resources as well as address the issues of Black health in Black Belt counties. Through the creation of this project, "Ambassadors" will be recruited and trained to educating residents on the importance of vaccinations, boosters, and testing to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 throughout the community.

In selecting Ambassadors for this project, Director Ledbetter said, "...the (most-important) attributes we were looking for in our candidates included: those who are well-known in the community, have an interest in healthcare and enjoy helping others, those who are open to new learning experiences and have a heart for outreach engagement, as well as those with great leadership skills...". The H.O.P.E. team rolled out a two-day curriculum training for H.O.P.E. Ambassadors the first week of February at Wallace Community College, and from all accounts Director Ledbetter says, "the training was a success!"

Overall, the BBCF H.O.P.E. Team is making great progress in its efforts. Currently, the Team has secured over 150 regional partnerships and documented over 3,500 contacts with residents. All-in-all, the project is steadily progressing and is already making inroads to provide a vital service to the communities throughout the region we serve!

BBCF H.O.P.E. Ambassadors & Community Coordinators



H.O.P.E. Ambassadors & Community Coordinators attended a two-day curriculum training the first week of February at Wallace Community College.





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ISSUE 6 | MARCH 15, 2023 | FOCUS ON FOOD INSECURITY



Food Insecurity in the Black Belt

“Food insecurity in the Black Belt is an issue that really hits home for us especially as it affects our children and their families across all of the areas we serve in 12 counties of the Black Belt,” said Felecia Lucky, BBCF president. Food insecurity is an ongoing and evolving dilemma that has detrimentally impacted the Black Belt region for decades and was exacerbated by the pandemic.

During the pandemic, BBCF shifted gears from running their community programs, to making sure residents in the region had meals everyday. They coordinated over 155,000 boxes of fresh produce, meat and dairy worth \$6.3 million to be distributed across 16 counties in the Black Belt. These efforts inspired an initiative called the Black Belt Sustainable Food Collective, whose goal is to develop a sustainable food collective in order to provide a permanent food presence across the Black Belt region. BBCF staff is helping to connect farmers, former USDA employees, higher education leaders, farming cooperative leaders, and concerned residents to serve on an action planning committee.

In 2022, the BBCF engaged in a food insecurity study involving a variety of methods, including surveys and community focus group meetings. They published the findings in a comprehensive report, which revealed not only a lack of overall production as a prevailing issue, but also highlighted problems and concerns with distribution and coordination of need relative to vulnerable populations; as well as a need for greater sources of fresh fruits and vegetables. In short, the report highlighted an overriding need for Local Food Source Sustainability.

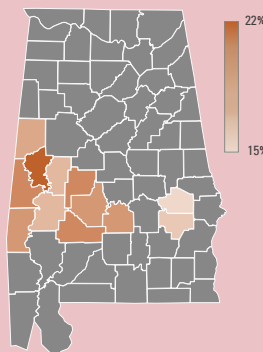
Through initiatives such as the Black Belt Sustainable Food Collective, the Community Grants Program, and the constant surveying of its constituents through surveys and group meetings, BBCF is making strides towards the alleviation of local food insecurity in the Black Belt.

Source: Alabama Education Lab online, September 2022

FOOD INSECURITY IN ALABAMA

In the State of Alabama, an average of approximately 15% of the population lacks consistent, adequate access to food. In the Black Belt counties, this number reaches as high as 22%.

Bullock - 16%	Hale - 17%	Perry - 20%
Choctaw - 19%	Lowndes - 19%	Pickens - 18%
Dallas - 19%	Macon - 15%	Sumter - 20%
Greene - 22%	Marengo - 17%	Wilcox - 20%



—LOCAL COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM— IV VETS: YORK, ALABAMA

“IV Vets” is a Local Food Source Sustainability program in York, Alabama (Sumter County) founded by La’Shun Wallace. It is a minority Veteran organization whose primary mission and focus is regenerative farming: to serve the food needs of communities in the Black Belt and fill vital entry point and distribution gaps—i.e., “food deserts”—that currently plague the region. Mr. Wallace says, “...This (sustainable food source) journey started from the moment I moved back home to York. We had nowhere in our community to get cost effective and healthy food. We must travel outside our own community to buy any type of fresh food just to make a decent meal: so, I contacted the Federation of Southern Cooperatives who guided me to become a farmer.”



Currently, IV Vets is in the process of purchasing a 120-acre ranch, which will allow the organization to facilitate USDA (et al.) endorsed technical training and to build USDA Commercial Meat processing and Commercial Fruits and Vegetables processing facilities; thus, enabling smaller local farmers to get their animal and produce harvests to market and distribution much easier. Operating with a mantra of “each one teach one”, IV Vets also endeavors to cultivate and empower the next generation of farmers by creating and promoting youth agricultural training programs throughout the county, with the assistance of 4-H.



Future leaders summer camp of 2022



Feeding cows in Sumter County



Farm visit to BDA in Uniontown, AL



Fabrication room at White Oak Pastures





The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 7 | APRIL 3, 2023 | FOCUS ON CLIMATE GENTRIFICATION



It's not just in the air, it's in the ground

Black Belt counties throughout the state are facing increasingly difficult environmental quality challenges relative to land usage—also coined as “environmental injustice”—specifically with regards to air quality and/or waste disposal. There has seemingly always been a correlation between environmental injustice and poverty—especially throughout the Black Belt region.

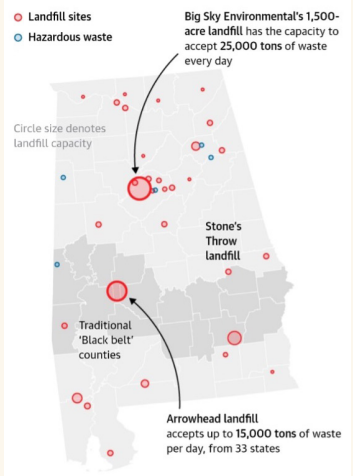
As of 2020, Alabama had a total of 168 operational landfills—more than three times as many as the state of New York per capita. Many of the largest landfills in the state are located in the Black Belt counties which is attributed to low land values and extreme poverty. In many cases, the dire conditions are coupled with the competing and conflicting interests of private landowners; resulting in local residents being blindsided by the appearance of new dumping sites and lacking the support from local and state officials to “regulate” the number of sites or the substances being disposed. State officials have little or no power to regulate dumping on private lands, leaving many of these communities with the lingering stench of foul air and health issues such as chronic asthma along with other respiratory and cardiovascular complications resulting from the hazardous waste fumes, drift, and leaching.

The Chemical Waste Management landfill near the town of Emelle, Alabama is known as the single largest hazardous waste landfill in the United States. Emelle is in Sumter County where nearly a third of the residents live below poverty level and 90% of the people residing near the landfill are African American. At one point, the landfill accepted and disposed of nearly 40% of all hazardous waste in the U.S. resulting in a myriad of health issues for residents living near the site’s 12.8 million pounds of toxic releases. In the early 1990s, in response to the dangers, local residents banded together and took legal action against the disposal company and its continued hazardous waste disposal activities, taking their case all the way to the Supreme Court. Unfortunately, their legal efforts were unsuccessful; and, to make matters worse the State Legislature lowered the disposal fees for burying waste at the Emelle site with proponents citing such would boost usage of the landfill and create more jobs in West Alabama—an uphill argument to fight against at best. Consequently, the ordeal of the residents of Emelle and Sumter County continues to this day—unabated and unchallenged.

Another example is Uniontown, a small city in Perry County, Alabama, approximately 70 miles west of the state capital. Uniontown’s population is almost 85% African American with an average per capita income of \$12,295 and an estimated 49% living below poverty level. The citizens of Uniontown have been suffering from the differential burden of air, water, and soil contamination due to two distinct pollution sources: The Arrowhead Landfill and The Southeastern Cheese Corporation manufacturing plant. Possible hazardous exposures associated with the Arrowhead Landfill’s operations include diesel exhaust constituents and coal fly ash containing several toxic heavy metals such as arsenic, mercury, and cadmium; meanwhile, the Cheese Manufacturing plant is accused of overloading the town’s already antiquated wastewater system through unlawful waste discharge from the plant, resulting in massive soil and water contaminations.

Indeed, this is a growing trend leading to residents developing many chronic health conditions directly linked to these polluting facilities and and their lingering and consequential affects; and adding another layer of complexity to the ongoing challenges facing many of the communities and regions of the Black Belt.

Sources: theguardian.com (4/15/19); ceejh.center/air-quality (3/26/21); insider.com (8/11/20); adem.alabama.gov/ (9/30/20); latimes.com/archives



Map Credit: theguardian.com; Sources: Alabama Department of Environmental Management. US Census Bureau

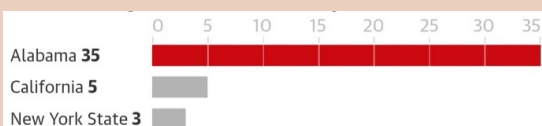


The Arrowhead Landfill in Uniontown, AL sprawls over an area twice the size of New York City's Central Park, accepting the waste from 33 different states. Photo Credit: John L. Wathen/MCT/Tribune News Service via Getty Image



Chemical Waste Management landfill in Emelle, AL serves as a regional disposal and transfer facility managing liquid and solids drums containing industrial and hazardous waste. Photo Credit: <https://www.wmsolutions.com/pdf/factsheet/EmelleBrochure.pdf>

Landfills in Alabama - Alabama has 35 landfill sites per million residents, compared with New York State which has just three for every million.



168
Landfills in the State of Alabama

32
Municipal Solid Waste Landfills

54
Industrial Landfills

82
Construction and Demolition Landfills



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ISSUE 8 | APRIL 19, 2023 | IMPACT ON ARTS & CULTURE



Black Belt Arts Initiative

The Black Belt region is known for its rich artistic and cultural heritage, which is a source of pride and economic opportunity for the communities and people the Black Belt Community Foundation serves. The BBCF has always been a strong advocate for Arts in the region and remains committed to strengthening community engagement with exposure to arts experiences through its grantmaking. By partnering with the Youth & Cultural Committee of the Black Belt Action Commission and the Alabama State Council on the Arts, BBCF helped to establish the Black Belt Arts Initiative (BBAI), which has distributed over **\$1.7 million** in arts grants throughout the region since its inception in 2006!



In many cases, the BBAI Arts Grants are the critical lifeline that sustains many K-12 public school Arts programs in the Black Belt against a constant backdrop of dwindling funds and budget cuts. According to a (2018) report from the Alabama Artistic Literacy Consortium, nearly 76% of students in rural Alabama have little or no access to Arts education opportunities. "We know that there is a gap. When I think about it, it seems like [Arts] funding has been cut for so long that I don't know [whether] it's the first thing to get cut anymore—it's just not been there," BBCF President Felecia Lucky said.

This is the case in Greene County where students in public schools rarely get to engage in theater or choir activities. The Center for Rural Family Development (CFRD) in Eutaw, Alabama is working to change that for the passionate local high school students who wouldn't otherwise have an avenue to the fine arts. Through funding from a 2022 BBAI Arts Grant, the CFRD was able to cast and produce an original three-act stage play and musical which was performed by local high students at the Black Belt Folks Roots Festival last summer.

Another past BBAI Arts Grant recipient is ArtsRevive, in Dallas County whose guiding principle is a belief art can be an opportunity-maker for communities and individuals alike. The previous Arts Grant awards have been used to help fund their annual Photographic Nights of Selma Festival, an event where photographers across the globe come to Selma to highlight photography and its universal power as an art form. Indeed, in terms of the affective reach of the festival ArtsRevive Director, Becky Youngblood has previously stated, "It's always fun to see the children [in Dallas County] interact with and have the opportunity to be around people that they otherwise would never have met...they would have never run into a famed photographer from France just in their everyday life unless we brought them to Selma."

With over 17 years of grant awards and partnerships in the region's vibrant Arts community, the BBCF proudly announces its **2023 Arts Grant Cycle**. Community-based organizations from Bullock, Choctaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Perry, Pickens, Sumter, and Wilcox counties are encouraged to apply. Please contact Jennifer McCohnell at jmccohnell@blackbeltfound.org for more information about the application process and/or required workshops.



The Freedom Quilting Bee Legacy group in Wilcox County received a 2022 Arts Grant which allowed them to provide a 3-part 'Tours of Museums' Day Trip Series for members of the community. Pictured above is FQB Legacy Board Member, Minnie Williams, during a tour of the Birmingham Museum of Art where they saw an original Freedom Quilting Bee quilt on display.



The Community Foundation of Uniontown also received a 2022 Arts Grant for a community mural project that was recently completed (March 2023). Designed by Uniontown resident artist, Jason Irvin, the mural allowed the community to tell its own story and history in a way that is meaningful to them.



2019 BBCF Arts grantees gathered in Selma during the last in-person Arts Grants Awards ceremony. 2023 represents the first year BBCF is able to return to an in-person event!

Sources: montgomeryadvertiser.com (5/19/22 & 4/18/23); perrycountyherald.net (3/6/23); einpresswire.com (5/16/22); arts.govimpact/state-profiles/alabama; artsactionfund.org/

Alabama Arts Facts: The Arts & Culture Sector

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis & National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 2023 (2021 data collected during the pandemic)



CONTRIBUTES
\$5.4B
TO THE STATE'S ECONOMY



REPRESENTS
2.1%
OF THE STATE'S GDP



SUPPORTS
43,981
JOBS IN THE STATE





The Black Belt Community Foundation

DATA IMPACT CENTER

The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 9 | MAY 3, 2023 | FOCUS ON K-12 EDUCATION



BBCF Prepares to Introduce the Boulevard Initiative

With recent focus on declining enrollment, lower than average proficiency rates, graduation rates, as well as College and Career Readiness throughout K-12 schools in the Black Belt region, the BBCF has focused its efforts and attention on pathways towards post-secondary education opportunities via mentoring and partnerships beyond the classroom as it prepares to roll-out the **Boulevard Initiative** beginning with high schools in Selma/Dallas County in Fall 2023.

The reality is, students in K-12 schools in the Black Belt are performing disproportionately lower than non-Black Belt schools throughout the state. Many of these trends are attributed to the direct and indirect effects of extreme poverty, teacher shortages, and lack of broadband and technology access—among other reasons. And, as the University of Alabama’s Education Policy Center estimates 60% of jobs in Alabama will require education beyond a high school diploma by 2025, the need for the Boulevard Initiative is clear.

To respond to this reality, the BBCF aims to engage and establish “connective tissue” with students beyond their typical community networks, such as family or local churches. The prevailing rationale for this intervention initiative is, “...each one to reach one and teach one...” according to BBCF Community Engagement Officer and Initiative Coordinator, Erica Williams. She further adds, “...we cannot change some of the staffing and instructional dilemmas happening directly in the classroom, but we can leverage our relationships with schools and districts and be proactive in creating impactful change to make a difference for students in terms of how they see their future.” The Boulevard Initiative will build connections between 11th and 12th grade students and professional mentors from in and around the community by cultivating one-on-one relationships, using app-based technology as the primary vehicle for establishing those relationships.



Erica Williams, BBCF Community Engagement Officer & Boulevard Initiative Coordinator

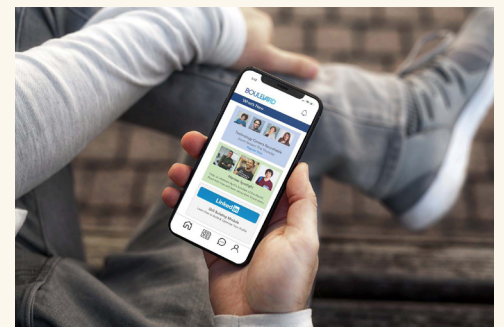
Indeed, the Boulevard Initiative reflects the essence of the BBCF, and we are confident the initiative will positively impact the lives and learning outcomes of the students we reach throughout the Black Belt.

Sources: alreporter.com (3/8/22); University of Alabama Education Policy Center - edpolicy.ua.edu/ (July 2022)

MOVEMENT, MOMENTUM, & MENTORSHIP - BOULEVARD -

Boulevard is a tech-enabled mentor system that provides companies with impactful employee or student engagement opportunities as well as creating an immediate and measurable pipeline of high quality matched talent.

Boulevard’s app-based technology will be the primary vehicle for establishing the one-on-one relationships between the 11th and 12th grade Black Belt students and professional mentors.

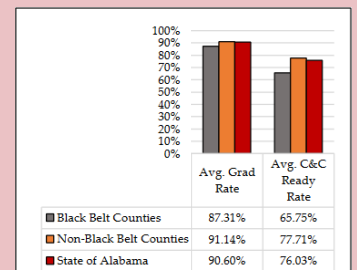
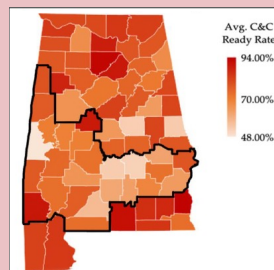


Source: blvdmentor.com

K-12 EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

By 2025, it is estimated that 60% of Alabama’s jobs will require education beyond a high school diploma. The map and bar graph to the right underscore that Black Belt schools are disproportionately lower performing than non-Black Belt schools by graduation and college & career readiness rates.

Source: edpolicy.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2207_Black-Belt_Series-Book.pdf





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SELMA SUN EDITION | MAY 12, 2023 | FOCUS ON STORM RECOVERY



Crews work to cleanup storm debris from January 12th tornado in Selma. Source: selmasun.com/news (5/2/2023)

Storm Recovery in Dallas County

BBCF's ongoing tornado disaster relief fundraising efforts have resulted in nearly \$700,000 being disbursed to date in systematic grant awards, currently in collaboration with five (5) community partner organizations in Dallas County. BBCF disbursed \$150,000 to Dallas County Family Resource Center, which has helped nearly 70 families to date with recovery efforts ranging from housing repair or replacement to food and support towards financial stability; more importantly, the Dallas County Family Resource Center's disbursement allowed them to apply for and secure matching Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) allocations.

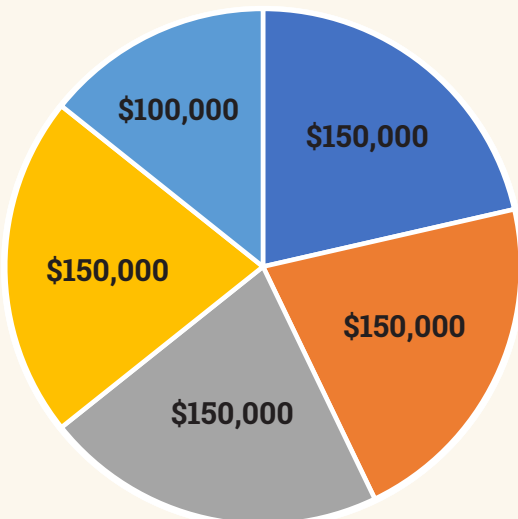
The Gospel Tabernacle Church received a \$150,000 allocation to help their community clean up debris, replace furniture and clothing, and supplement other material costs not covered by FEMA such as, temporary housing, utility deposits, replacement of small appliances, mental health services, and transportation. Black Belt and Central Alabama Housing received a \$150,000 disbursement to help affected community members replace furniture and household items, assist with housing issues such as debris removal and general repairs, paying construction workers, food replacement, deposit assistance for apartment rental, and to provide financial assistance for utility reconnection, as well as offsetting administrative costs related to disaster relief assistance. The Coalition for Concerned Families received a \$100,000 allocation to provide financial assistance to community members for uninsured/underinsured repairs to owners or renters, provide hot meals, replace furniture, and to provide other various storm-related needs for affected members in an overall effort to preserve and maintain their dignity. Finally, the Fathers of St. Edmund, Southern Missions, Inc. received a \$150,000 allocation to use in conjunction with their Emergency Solutions Grant program that focuses on finding permanent housing for homeless individuals. Their funds will also be used along with TANF matching funds they secured to support individuals with utilities, employment, food, clothing, shelter, and other emergency needs related to disaster relief.

These examples, along with additional disbursements to be made in the wake of natural calamity, highlight the Black Belt Community Foundation's integral role in raising funds critical to the recovery effort and collaborating with our community partners to allocate and disburse those funds; and help people in the affected communities rebuild their lives.



Selma tornado recovery cleanup efforts. Source: wsfa.com (5/2/2023)

To date, BBCF's ongoing tornado disaster relief fundraising efforts have resulted in \$700,000 being disbursed via grant awards to five community partner organizations in Dallas County.



- Fathers of St. Edmund, Southern Missions, Inc.
- Dallas County Family Resource Center
- Gospel Tabernacle Church
- Blackbelt & Central Alabama Housing
- Coalition of Concerned Families





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SELMA SUN EDITION | JUNE 2, 2023 | FOCUS ON RURAL HOSPITALS



Declining Access to Healthcare & Standard of Care in AL

Access to healthcare and standard of care have always been challenges in the Black Belt region as matters of history, socioeconomic realities, and policy decisions. However, specific concerns about the lack of access to healthcare in the Black Belt have been frequently reflected in recent studies and reports: most Black Belt counties are now below the statewide average of 3.9 beds per 1000 residents. In fact, three (3) traditional Black Belt counties (i.e., Lowndes, Perry, and Pickens) do not even have a single hospital.

In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem, ravaging the state and putting an inordinate strain on its already depleted resources. It was reported that nearly 24% of rural households were unable to get medical care for acute medical issues during the pandemic. Interestingly, the cascading dilemma related to the effects of COVID-19 on communities in the Black Belt was one of the motivating forces behind BBCF's collaborative efforts that resulted in launching the H.O.P.E. Project. The H.O.P.E. Project was launched across all 12 counties in the Black Belt in early 2023 and is already making inroads towards improving the quality of healthcare of the citizens that BBCF H.O.P.E. Ambassadors serve in their communities.

One of the most troubling impacts in healthcare due to shifts in policy is the declining quality of care and access to prenatal care. In recent years, maternal and infant health in Alabama ranks among the lowest in the entire country with 13.1% of babies in the state being born pre-term (meaning before 37 weeks of pregnancy). The report also cites nearly 17% of Black babies born in Alabama are preterm, compared to 11% of those that are white and/or Hispanic, and 10% of those that are Asian or Pacific Islander; the bottom line being the preterm birth rate among Black women is nearly 50% higher than the rate among all others.

Limited access to health facilities and declining quality and standard of care is greatly contributing to the increasing amount of poor health outcomes across the state. While the impacts of access and quality of care have not seemingly impacted the Black Belt region inordinately more than any other areas in the state thus far, extreme poverty, and the increasing shift towards more-restrictive policy decisions – specifically as it relates to Women's Health – could be a tipping point resulting in more detrimentally impactful outcomes.

Sources: University of Alabama Education Policy Center, 2023; Montgomery Advertiser online 11/22/2022

–MATERNAL HEALTHCARE “DESERTS”–

Shifts in policy have created maternity healthcare “deserts” across the state; meaning, only 21 counties in Alabama (just 31% of the state) have complete access to maternity care, while the other 43 counties have little or no access to maternity care. Furthermore, eleven (11) counties in the state do not have a single federally qualified health center. The only hospital in the traditional Black Belt region that offers maternity care is Vaughan Regional Medical Center, in Selma (Dallas County).



Vaughan Regional Medical Center in Selma. Source: Montgomery Advertiser 3/25/20

One of the starkest consequential results in all this is the fact that Black mothers have higher infant death rates than others throughout the state, according to the Alabama Department of Health.

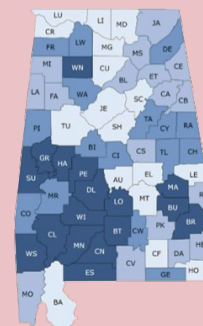


13.1% of babies born in Alabama are born preterm (meaning before 37 weeks of pregnancy; often resulting in health risks that would otherwise be preventable. Source: Kyle Robertson, The Columbus Dispatch

AL COUNTIES RANKED BY HEALTH FACTORS

Health factors represent community conditions that we can change to improve health and opportunity, such as access to quality education, living wage jobs, and quality clinical care. The counties were ranked using the 4 health factors listed. The map to the right shows Alabama's **health factor rankings** by county - the lighter colored areas indicate better health factors while the darker colored areas indicate worse health factors.

- 1 Health Behaviors**
Diet, exercise, tobacco, alcohol & drug use, sexual activity
- 2 Clinical Care**
Access to care, quality of care
- 3 Social & Economic Factors**
Education, employment, income, family & social support, community safety
- 4 Physical Environment**
Air & water quality, housing & transit



Health Factor Rankings

- 1 to 17
- 18 to 34
- 35 to 50
- 51 to 67





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SELMA SUN EDITION | JUNE 15, 2023 | IMPACT ON LEADERSHIP

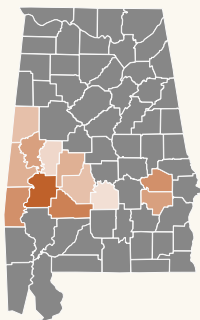


“Each group of Community Associates is a pattern of the Black Belt quilt that collectively makes up the tapestry of the people and the story, the legacy, of the region as a whole.”

– Khandi Flowers, Macon Co. Community Associate & Board Member

2023 Community Associates

We salute the 102 Community Associates of our 12 Black Belt counties. They represent the lifblood of the BBCF and the lifelines within the communities they serve.



Community Associates Per County	
Bullock – 8	Macon – 11
Choctaw – 11	Marengo – 17
Dallas – 7	Perry – 9
Greene – 9	Pickens – 6
Hale – 4	Sumter – 7
Lowndes – 3	Wilcox – 12



- BULLOCK** – Tracy Larkin, Carolyn Jackson, Betty Sanders, Ron Smith, Juanita Smith, Saint Thomas, Robert Turner, Ruth Turner
- CHOCTAW** – Sammie Bourrage, Jacquelyn Bush, Doris Jackson, Africa McCoy, Bobby Ridgeway, Martha Wallace, Glenda Wooten, Marcus Hampton, Danielle Hampton, Linda Turner-Gaines, Tony Cherry
- DALLAS** – JoAnn Smith, Lawrence Wofford, Mae Frances Brown, Sandra Cowan, Keith Jones, Shelly McGee, Iona Martin
- GREENE** – Nancy Cole, Miriam Leftwich, Darlene Robinson, Mollie Rowe, Johnni Strode-Morning, Geraldine Walton, Johnny Williams, Carol Zippert, John Zippert
- HALE** – Willie Hudson, Marilyn Pickens, Patti Rhodes, Ada Webb
- LOWNDES** – Rutha Davis-Bonner, Shirley McCall, Dale Braxton
- MACON** – Lionel Armstead, Betty Broadnax, Jacquelyn Carlisle, Wythena Gullette, Norma Jackson, Tia-Lennora Pierrot, Jackie Walker, Sawanda Wilson, Melanie (Mel) Tolbert, Kimberly Maddox, Khandi Flowers
- MARENGO** – Delores Cunningham, Willie Dillard, Hattie Moore, Jesse Moore, Ernestine Mullen, Ola M. Nixon, Edward Oates, Alex Roberson, Thomas Rodgers, Mary Williams, Tamika Dial, Toney Nixon, Marstiner Jackson, Minnie Prince, Earlene Roberson, Shirley McCaskey, Audrey Burrell
- PERRY** – Emefa Butler, Jamaal Hunter, Tamara Kennie, Albert Turner, Jr., Monica Bryant, Carlton Hogue, Gail Black, Edgred Ward, Della Maynor
- PICKENS** – Belinda Craig, Janice Jones, LaSonja Richardson, Paulette Newberns, Terrence Windham, Paris Cousette
- SUMTER** – Lovie Burrell-Parks, Marcus Campbell, Debra Clark, Veronica Drake, Tina Jones, Cordelia Turner, Lillian Wideman
- WILCOX** – Shelia Dortch, Ansidina Finklea, Daniel Garner, Rosemarie Garner, Jacqueline Hives, Ethel Johnson, Alma King, Kim Kelly, Creola Moorer, Janice Robinson, Sheryl Threadgill-Matthews, Joyce Williams

Community Associates: The Lifblood and The Lifelines

One of the BBCF’s goals, as it relates to collaborating with the communities it serves, is to make a difference through **action-based philanthropy**: an “all hands on-deck”, “all for one and one for all” mindset that led to the establishment of the Community Associates Program. As Community Engagement Officer, Erica Williams states, “The Community Associates are the eyes and ears of the Black Belt Communities, the heart and soul of the BBCF.”

The Community Associates are one of the primary leadership development resources within the Black Belt counties: with a total of 102 throughout the 12 counties BBCF serves. Community Associates are appointed for 4-year terms and many have served multiple cycles and contribute countless hours of invaluable service in their capacities. Additionally, many of the Community Associates either concurrently hold or have gone on to hold elected and appointed public offices within their communities: Bullock County Community Associate and Board Member, Robert Turner simultaneously held a local school board seat for nearly 16 years; and still others have started as Community Associates within their counties and have eventually become BBCF Board Members, such as Mr. Turner and Darlene Robinson (Greene County) — to name a few.

In the immediate aftermath of the tornado outbreaks in early January (2023), it was the Community Associates of Dallas, Greene, Hale, and Sumter Counties who in many cases were the first “boots on the ground” to help people affected with emergency housing, medical, food, debris removal and home damage repair, in addition to fundraising. And, as if answering a call to action, Community Associates from surrounding counties without storm damage responded accordingly to help their counterparts deal with the overwhelming calamity the tornados wrought.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Associates were the critical lifeline in making sure families were fed: as they organized and distributed nearly 100,000 boxes of food throughout 19 counties—including the (12) counties of the Black Belt. In rural Bullock County, one of the most sparsely-populated counties in the Black Belt, BBCF Board Member Robert Turner put the entire pandemic odyssey in perspective “...the (2) grocery stores that shutdown during the pandemic covered an area of over 24 square miles, which left a lot of people in dire-straits. It was the Community Associates who amassed nearly 18 pick-up truck loads of food and financial support gift cards and distributed it to over 20 families who were in desperate need.”

In retrospect, Board Member Turner affirmed the critical role of the Community Associates during the pandemic and throughout the history of the BBCF: that being the lifeline, if not the lifblood, of the organization in the scope of action-based philanthropy. The integral connection of the organization’s relationship with the Community Associates as the primary needs-based resource and assistance providers, will ensure the BBCF continues to provide the resources and initiatives that will in turn improve the lives and outcomes of the communities it serves.



Community Associates gathered for group photo at the 2023 Retreat.





The Black Belt Community Foundation

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ISSUE 15 | JUNE 30, 2023 | FOCUS ON VOTING RIGHTS



Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act Upheld!

On June 8, 2023, in a surprise decision (*Allen v Milligan*), the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that Alabama had diluted the power of Black voters in drawing congressional voting maps, reaffirming the power of Section 2 of the landmark Voting Rights Act many thought was in peril of being completely gutted.

“I’m hoping that this is a time where our elected officials choose to put Alabama on the right side of the Voting Rights Act.” – Evan Milligan



Evan Milligan (pictured speaking at podium), the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit, speaks with reporters following oral arguments at the Supreme Court in Washington. Source: AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, File

The central focus of the argument concerned voting maps redrawn by state lawmakers after the 2020 census, which packed most Black voters throughout the Black Belt into one voting district; thus, leaving only one majority Black Congressional district in a state with seven congressional districts and a **Black voting-age population that had grown to over 26%**. The Plaintiffs argued that State officials who created the current maps exerted too much control over the redistricting process, effectively engineering their own victories

or decreasing the advantages of the opposing party, by assigning voters of particular political persuasions and backgrounds to a single district. Indeed, the current electoral map reflects that nearly 55% of voters in Alabama’s 7th Congressional district are black, while only 31% of voters in the other (6) Congressional districts throughout the State are black.

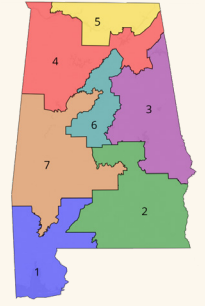
The Alabama case was part of a nationwide series of legal battles over redistricting (i.e., “Gerrymandering”), which has often resulted in diluting the voting power of growing “majority minority” communities, much to their political disadvantage especially when it comes to policy-making decisions. The ruling in *Milligan* will go into effect and current electoral maps must be drawn for the 2024 election cycle, which may potentially allow Black voters to elect another Congressional representative of their choice (2 total) – monumental progress. The Alabama decision may also affect cases in other states, such as Georgia, Louisiana, and North Carolina who are currently engaged in legal challenges to their electoral maps that reflect similar inequities in voter representation.

In welcoming the decision, Attorney General Merrick Garland stated, “The decision rejects efforts to further erode fundamental voting rights protections and preserves the principle that in the United States all eligible voters must be able to exercise their constitutional right to vote free from discrimination based on their race.” As this unfolds over the new few months, communication, civic engagement, and individual participation (overall) in this process throughout the communities of the Black Belt will be crucial; and the BBCF will be an active partner in supporting the region when and wherever needed.

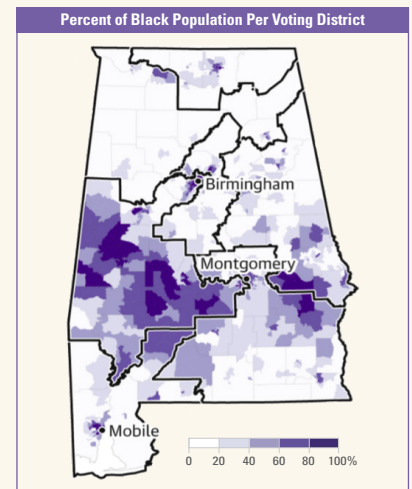
Sources: abcnews.go.com (6/8/2023); apnews.com (6/27/23); davesredistricting.org (Maps); theguardian.com (6/8/23); nytimes.com (06/08/23); washingtonpost.com (6/12/2023)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT MAPS IN – ALABAMA –

The state of Alabama is currently divided into **seven** congressional districts, each represented by a member of the United States House of Representatives. The current congressional districts map has only one majority Black district in a state where more than one in four residents are Black.



Black voters are packed into the state’s 7th congressional district, where they represent approximately 55% of the voting population.



The courts ruled that to fix the Voting Rights violation, the new plan must have a 2nd district that is majority Black or close enough to majority Black to give Black voters an opportunity to elect a representative of their choice. This decision sets up the state’s first significant revamp of its congressional districts since 1992, when Alabama was ordered by the courts to create its 1st majority-Black district.





The Black Belt Community Foundation

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The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 16 | JULY 14, 2023 | FOCUS ON HEAD START



“BBCF Head Start is changing the trajectory of our kids by empowering them to be better decision makers & to be more emotionally intelligent.”

– Taquila Monroe, BBCF Head Start Director

FREEWILL HEAD START

– BROADBAND PROJECT –

In 2021, the BBCF Head Start Program in Wilcox County had to relocate due to a tragic fire at the elementary school where it was previously housed. After a considerable amount of research, an agreement was reached between the Foundation and the Freewill Church of God in Christ to house our Head Start program.

The Freewill Church was a great solution and met all our needs but one: internet services. The minimal DSL service to the building was not fast enough for the innovative technology used by our Head Start program. It was determined that broadband access was the only solution. Mediacom was contracted to complete the new service installation, which would require an underground conduit run of 624 feet from the source to the Church building.

After a lengthy waiting period with delays in construction, the final inspection, installation and activation was completed on June 28, 2023. BBCF IT installed its own router and access points. The level of wireless service to the building was increased by 98%.

The numbers below represent the download & upload speeds of the internet connection at Freewill Church measured in megabits per second (Mbps). Left: Speeds prior to broadband project; Right: Speeds after broadband project.

⬇️ DOWNLOAD Mbps

6.57

⬇️ DOWNLOAD Mbps

269.71

⬆️ UPLOAD Mbps

0.41

⬆️ UPLOAD Mbps

12.73

Thanks to BBCF IT, President Lucky, Pastor Williams, and Denise Drummond (Mediacom Advocate) for their work and support on this project that represents a remarkable improvement in broadband access for our staff and students.

BBCF Head Start 1st in AL with Newest Tech

Head Start is a national program begun in 1965 during President Johnson’s “Great Society” campaign as part of the War on Poverty. Since 2017, the Black Belt Community Foundation has operated six Head Start programs, for children ages 3-5, located in four Black Belt counties (Choctaw, Dallas, Marengo and Wilcox) serving 307 children annually. With a budget of \$4 million dollars and a staff of over 70 personnel, BBCF Head Start is one of the premiere early childhood educational programs in the state.



President Lucky engages with student during visit to Head Start classroom in April '22.

Head Start is advantageous in that it differs from public school Pre-K and local daycare programs in many ways, according to BBCF President, Felecia Lucky. “Head Start focuses on the whole child with an emphasis on education, health, nutrition, and social-emotional well-being, while preparing them to enter elementary school. In addition, we provide family support and promote family involvement”, says Lucky.

The latest technology-based innovation for BBCF Head Start classrooms will be in use this fall. Children will have access to the newly purchased **IgniteTable by Hatch™**. These digital devices promote collaboration by having children engage



Example photo of students using IgniteTable.



Taquila Monroe, Executive Director of BBCF Head Start

in knowledge-based, problem-solving activities that also enhance their social-emotional learning. According to Taquila Monroe, Executive Director of BBCF Head Start, “We are the first in the state of Alabama to purchase IgniteTable for every Head Start classroom in our program. BBCF Head Start is changing the trajectory of our kids by empowering them to be better decision makers and to be more emotionally intelligent. We are taking STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) to a whole new level.”

Research supports the advantages Head Start provides children through adulthood. A 2021 study noted that students enrolled in Head Start ended up having substantially higher high school completion, college enrollment and college completion rates than comparable children who were not enrolled in Head Start.

Families interested in learning more about the BBCF Head Start program, or enrolling their children in Head Start for the upcoming school year should contact Judith Hardy, Family Service Coordinator, at 334-349-0372 or 334-419-2019.

Sources: aaweb.org (Bailey, Sun, & Timpe, 2021); hatchearlylearning.com/technology/ignitetable

BBCF Head Start Facts, Figures, and Locations

State-funded pre-k programs have a 1:10 teacher to student ratio while Head Start has a 2:15 teacher to student ratio for early childhood, which provides more flexibility and opportunity to support the children more because of the smaller session size.



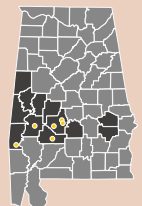
STATE PRE-K 1:10



HEAD START 2:15



Head Start ensures children are provided hearing, vision, and developmental/social-emotional screenings so we can know how to better support the children.





The Black Belt Community Foundation

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The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 17 | JULY 31, 2023 | IMPACT ON COMMUNITY



Community Grants: BBCF's Commitment to "Trust-Based Philanthropy" Approach

BBCF has long awarded Community Grants throughout the Black Belt to address a wide variety of community needs. The money provided has had an unquestionable impact on the citizens of the counties receiving these awards. In 2023, BBCF adopted a new and even more responsive model of giving based on the practice known as "Trust-Based Philanthropy". This approach centers on equity, humility, and transparency, by redistributing power so those closest to the issues determine the appropriate solutions. Trust-based philanthropy utilizes honesty, trust, respect, and anti-racist policies to centralize power over resources and outcomes in the community.

BBCF has developed 10 grantmaking principles and guidelines to assure the tenets of Trust-Based Philanthropy are fully actualized. Grantmaking decisions must align with the mission and vision of BBCF, while acting on the values of the community and collaborating with partners to seek and select solutions. In the process, the grants must expand community engagement while meeting and impacting genuine community needs. Projects chosen are funded at a level to ensure intended outcomes can be achieved. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are additionally measured by promotion of anti-racist behaviors. The entire grantmaking process must be performed with integrity and transparency. By utilizing BBCF Local Grant Committees in each county, decisions are made by those closest to the issues voiced by their community. Local Grant Committees score applications from their county based on community needs, proposed delivery of services, potential of project to change the community, how the project will be evaluated, and the results of those evaluations disseminated, and finally, the requested budget for the project. The BBCF expects the principles, guidelines, and process, to enhance the impact of the already successful Community Grants program.

Source: Trust-Based Philanthropy Project: trustbasedphilanthropy.org (2020-2024)

IMPACT ON ALABAMA

BBCF is proud to fund 54 projects this year, totaling \$181,821. From community festivals to summer reading programs to health and wellness initiatives, this funding makes a **significant impact** in our communities, touching the lives of 26,356 individuals living in the Alabama Black Belt.



54

BLACK BELT GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS



\$181K

DISTRIBUTED TO BLACK BELT ORGANIZATIONS



26,356

INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY GRANT FUNDED PROJECTS

— 2023 Community Grant Recipients —

We congratulate the 2023 Community Grant recipients and commend them for the incredible work they are engaged in across the Black Belt region.

Bullock County

- » Bullock County SummerFest – Christian Leaders of USA, Inc.
- » CAMO Kids Annual Bullock County Fishing Derby – CAMO Kids of Bullock County Social Justice Foundation
- » 2023 Bullock County Humane Society Spay & Neuter Program – Bullock County Humane Society
- » Perote Heritage Festival – Perote Colored Cemetery
- » Storage for Equipment for Longevity – Bullock County High School Beehive Booster Club



Choctaw County

- » Operation Save the Children – Operation Save The Children
- » Commercial Drivers License Program – U Matter
- » The Last Caboose For Good – SAIASI Foundation
- » A Healthier YOU – Community Awareness & Prevention Programs
- » Healthy Endeavors: "Hands for Better Health" – Harvest Ministries
- » Mental Health & Substance Abuse Awareness Community Workshop Luncheon – WR McGrew Outreach Development & Education Program

Dallas County

- » Wellspring Counseling Program – AGES CDC
- » Learning Grade-Level Promotion Literacy Skills Through Culturally Relevant Books – Women and Youth Services of Selma AL, Inc.
- » Creating Activity Centers in the New Special Education Classroom at McRae Learning Center – McRae Learning Center
- » S.L.I.P. – Something Better Lifestyle Improvement Project
- » Selma PAL Youth Mentoring Program – Selma Police Athletic League
- » Dallas County Family Resource Center – Dallas County Family Resource Center



Greene County

- » Sow Beyond – Beyond the Brink
- » Seasoned Seniors – Eutaw Housing Authority Enrichment Program
- » Your Health is Your Wealth Project Phase II – Boy Scout Troop 945
- » CFRD Fall After-School Tutorial Program – Center For Rural Family Development
- » Still We Rise: Preparing Youth for Leadership – Society of Folk Arts and Culture
- » "Igniting A Change In Our Community" – United Purposes, Inc.
- » Lending a Hand Continues – Greene County Human Rights Commission

Hale County

- » Hale County Youth Mental Health Summit – Healing Steps Movement, Inc.
- » Reading & Learning Together is Fun! – Newbern Library, Inc.

Lowndes County

- » Purchase Trauma Bag Supplies and Train First Responders on Proper Usage – Burkville Volunteer Fire Department
- » Story Telling for Summer Reading – Hayneville/Lowndes County Public Library

Macon County

- » BABI Presents: The Macon County Summer Mentorship Arts Program - Pre-K to PhD: What Does Art Mean to Me – Babi-Bis and Blankets International
- » Cultivating Cultures in Our Community - We Are Better Together! – Too Good for Drugs Photojournalism
- » Abstractions by Jah Jah's Enrichment Camp – Abstractions by Jah Jah

Marengo County

- » Healthy Eating Project (HEP) – Marengo BBCF Distribution
- » Education with Focus on Computer Literacy – Friends of Theo Ratliff Activity Center
- » Meet-Up Indoor Walking and Blood Pressure Monitoring Program – Eastern Star Baptist Church, Inc.
- » Growing the Number of Entrepreneurs and Job Creators in the Black Belt – Rural Business & Training Center, Inc.
- » Renovation & Modernization of Existing Community Facility – Toney Nixon Music
- » "Elderly Empowerment: Building Collaborative Alliances" – Braxton Senior Care
- » Marengo County Youth Leadership/Foster Parent Recruitment and Training – Marengo Co. Foster Parent Assoc.

Perry County

- » CHOICE Youth CE² (Civic Education & Career Exploration) – C.H.O.I.C.E



Pickens County

- » Summer Camp STEM Math – Tranquility 2020
- » Reaching New Knowledge – Awareness Spoken Outreach Organization
- » Harvest Outreach Ministries – Harvest Outreach Ministries

Sumter County

- » Monthly Summit/Summer Camp – Divine Girls Coalition
- » Morning Star Senior Citizens – Morning Star Baptist Church Senior Citizens
- » Morning Star Community Center Development Board – Morning Star Community Center Development Board
- » Panola Outreach Back to School Community Family Festival – Panola Outreach
- » Annual Back to School Supply Give Away and Fun Day – Gainsville Youth Outreach Project
- » Memorial Legacy Project – Federation of Southern Cooperative
- » Marcus Campbell Future Start Basketball Camp and Boys to Men Mentoring Project – Young Men Building for the Future



Wilcox County

- » Promoting Outdoor Play (P.O.P) – Bessie W. Munden Recreational Park Inc.
- » A Child Will Lead Them – Build A Better Community
- » Community Extravaganza – Partners in Progress
- » Community-Wide Fun Day – Camden Community Youth Development Center
- » Snow Hill & Furman Community Self-Empowerment Efforts – Snow Hill Furman Volunteer Fire Department

Photos sourced from public social media sites of grantee organizations.



The Black Belt Community Foundation

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The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 18 | AUGUST 14, 2023 | FOCUS ON H.O.P.E. AMBASSADORS



Building a Healthier Black Belt - H.O.P.E. Superstars



Janice Maxine Jones, left, and Paris Cousette, right, are H.O.P.E. Ambassadors for Pickens Co.

The Health, Outreach, Promotion and Education (H.O.P.E.) grant awarded to the BBCF has successfully exceeded all benchmarks and expectations during their first year of service! With the goal being to communicate and educate members of local communities while emphasizing COVID-19 vaccines and the importance of contact tracing, BBCF H.O.P.E. Ambassadors have proven to be formidable stewards of Black Belt health. Since March 2023, the H.O.P.E. Ambassadors have gone from reaching 3,500 community members to reaching over 20,000 contacts throughout the 12 counties BBCF serves!

While collaborating with the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Alabama Workforce Development Councils, The University of Alabama School of Medicine, and many others, it is the H.O.P.E. Ambassadors themselves that have been at the forefront of this highly successful effort. Every Ambassador has taken charge of their responsibility to their individual community and served with valor in the face of the pandemic. Reaching 25 contacts per week (5 per day) is the standard expected of each H.O.P.E. Ambassador in order to achieve the grant's overall quota total.

Two of the H.O.P.E. Ambassadors have been recognized as "Superstars" by their peers and the BBCF leadership. Having gone "the extra mile" **Lucette Fletcher** (Greene County) and **Janice Maxine Jones** (Pickens County) are considered model Ambassadors for their willingness to exceed weekly quotas consistently since the implementation of the grant and for their ability to reach their fellow community members and gain their participation in the survey process.

When asked about the keys to her success in making 10-15 contacts per day, Lucette Fletcher stated, "being sociable and liking to help people is key. If I don't know the people in the neighborhood, I reach out to community and religious organizations and ask to attend their events. I will go wherever the people are including the Post Office and Dollar General. Being an Ambassador is a great opportunity to learn and to meet new people. It gives me confidence and joy to help people. I end each day by uploading the surveys I have collected into the computer and making plans for the next day's work."



Lucette Fletcher, left, at event promoting H.O.P.E. with fellow Greene County Ambassador, Stacey Benison-Mack, right.

Janice Maxine Jones' motto is "Any event where people are, I'm going to have my clipboard – baby I got it!" Ms. Jones engages in an Ambassador technique called "posting up", that is to go places people frequent, such as the Dollar Tree, and survey shoppers as they leave the store. This only requires her clipboard and a willingness to engage, which comes naturally for Ms. Jones, as she is a self-described "people-person". She also regularly represents the BBCF H.O.P.E. program at community events such as Back-to-School celebrations, local Youth basketball games, and church gatherings, where she has become known for always having her clipboard with her and taking all opportunities to make a new contact. These techniques help to fulfill her personal goal of collecting 10 surveys per day. Ms. Jones says she does the work because "It's something that needs to be done and in the long run it will help our county and contribute to building a healthier Black Belt." She also enjoys the exposure that it provides for the Black Belt Community Foundation and the ability to represent the organization in making positive change.

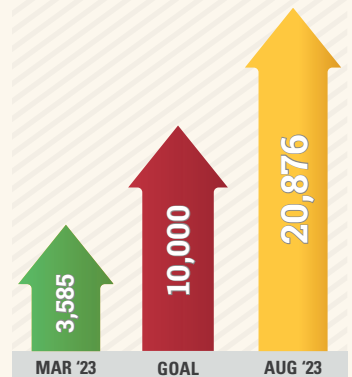


Janice Maxine Jones

BBCF H.O.P.E. directors Samantha Ledbetter and Wendell Paris, Jr. salute all of their Ambassadors, "they are the lifeblood of our program and the reason for our success."

- EXCEEDING - EXPECTATIONS

The H.O.P.E. Ambassadors have increased the number of educational contacts they've made from 3,585 in March 2023, to the current 20,876! This significantly surpasses the original goal of 10,000 contacts that was set forth at the beginning of the program. Each contact represents a survey entry into the database from which we can run reports and analyze results to better meet the needs of area residents. All 26 H.O.P.E. Ambassadors have contributed to this **482% increase** in contacts over the last 5 months and we commend them for their hard work and perseverance.



H.O.P.E. Ambassadors making educational contacts with community members and completing surveys.

Black Belt H.O.P.E. Program Ambassadors - Listed by County

BULLOCK – Ronald Smith & Ruth Turner
CHOCTAW – Danielle Hampton
DALLAS – Justine Furr & Darrio Melton
GREENE – Stacey Benison-Mack & Lucette Fletcher

HALE – Daniel Findley, Dollie Hudson, Ada Webb & Zina Wiggins
LOWNDES – Delmartre Bethel & Stacey Woodley
MACON – William Carson & Sawanda Wilson
MARENGO – Earnestine Burrell & Carveil Monghan

PERRY – Faith Dudley, Carlton Hogue, & Albert Turner
PICKENS – Paris Cousette & Janice Maxine Jones
SUMTER – Gloria Duff & Tyrenae Williams
WILCOX – Vonne Lyman & Kalisha Madison



The Black Belt Community Foundation

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ISSUE 19 | AUGUST 28, 2023 | FOCUS ON DISASTER RECOVERY



CASE MANAGEMENT THROUGH SELMA LTRG

Case management provides a fair and equitable process for the Selma LTRG to distribute resources to individuals and their families. By partnering with Umcor, the national case management organization specializing in disaster response, relief and recovery, the Selma LTRG is able to utilize their well-defined intake process to ensure cases qualify for assistance. Since they began hearing cases in June 2023, the Selma LTRG has heard and funded 14 cases in the amount of \$35,199.43.



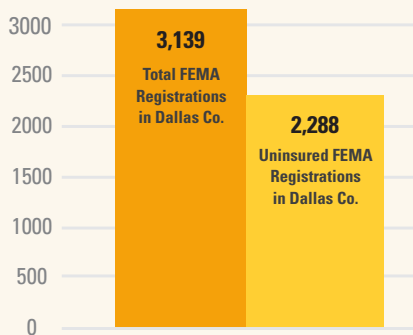
14
CASES



\$35K
FUNDED

To receive assistance from the Selma LTRG, an individual must first apply for FEMA assistance. So far 3,139 FEMA registrations have been received in Dallas County. Of those registrations,

2,288 people had no insurance to cover loss of property and fix damages from the storm - that's 73% of those who applied for FEMA help after the tornado.



The Selma Long-Term Recovery Group

A successful recovery is about the ability of individuals and families to rebound from their losses in a manner that sustains their physical, emotional, social and economic well-being.

The Selma Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG), formed following the January 12th tornadoes in the Selma - Dallas County area, has embraced this nationally recognized definition of recovery to achieve the best outcomes possible for the local community and its people.

The Selma LTRG is an outgrowth of the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), whose national, state, and local teams have over 50 years' experience responding to communities in America following disasters. Using the National VOAD Long Term Recovery Guide, the Selma LTRG has coordinated and is executing local recovery efforts following the most renowned standards of practice, around disaster recovery. With businessman Jay Gilmer serving as chair, the Selma LTRG is comprised of an array of dedicated local leaders from the civic, faith-based, non-profit, and commercial sectors of Selma. The Black Belt Community Foundation's involvement with the Selma LTRG has been led by Chief Community Engagement Officer, Rev. Chris Spencer from the onset. With the BBCF serving as the fiscal agent for the Selma LTRG, transparency is tantamount to success.

The most critical determinant of success for any LTRG is the collaboration between themselves and disaster case management. The Selma LTRG has helped coordinate recovery resources for voluntary agencies in Selma and has also created policies and processes so that disaster case managers, representing local clients, can access those resources as needed by their families. To receive assistance from Selma LTRG, an individual must first apply for FEMA assistance and then be approved through the case management process. The disaster case manager is then able to present cases to the Selma LTRG, which checks each case based on their unmet needs review process. Once a case has qualified for assistance, it goes to the funding phase. "That could be financial, it could be donations of materials. It will be determined based on the need," Gilmer said. Rebuilding will be a long-term process, Gilmer said, hence the name of the committee. While other organizations helped with immediate needs, the committee's work kicks in at the six-month mark and will likely last until the two-year anniversary helping families and individuals get back on their feet.

If you'd like to contribute to the recovery efforts, you can donate through the Selma Recovery Fund which was setup by BBCF in partnership with the City of Selma and Mayor James Perkins. The BBCF encourages individuals, organizations, businesses and others to donate to these funds to bring urgently needed relief to these communities.

To donate to the disaster relief funds, please visit:
blackbeltfound.org/2023-disaster-relief-funds/

Sources: [blackbeltnewsnetwork.com/news/\(06/12/23\)](https://blackbeltnewsnetwork.com/news/(06/12/23)); National Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster (nvoad.org/); Section 4 of the National Disaster Recovery Framework (fema.gov/pdf/recoveryframework/ndrf.pdf - Sept. 2011); [selmasun.com/news/\(05/11/23\)](https://selmasun.com/news/(05/11/23))

Thank you to members of the Selma LTRG for stepping up and helping our community in a time of need!

Jay Gilmer: Community Volunteer, LTRG Chairman; **John Grayson:** Pastor, Gospel Tabernacle COGIC & Board Member, Selma Housing Authority, LTRG Vice-Chairman; **Aaron Roper:** COO & Assistant VP of Program Integration, Edmundite Missions; **Chris Spencer:** Chief Community Engagement Officer, Black Belt Community Foundation, LTRG Treasurer; **Miriam Bearden:** Dietician & Board Member, United Way of Selma & Dallas County, LTRG Secretary; **Jeff Cothran:** Executive Director, United Way of Selma & Dallas County; **Lydia Chatmon:** Selma Director of Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation, Black Belt Community Foundation & Program Manager, Selma Center for Nonviolence; **Thiea Wilson:** Pastor, Temple Gate Seventh Day Adventist Church; **Mallory Kelly:** Regional Extension Agent, Alabama Cooperative Extension System; **Sarah Aghedo:** Community Director, Legacy Foundation of Historic Tabernacle Baptist Church; **Leodis Strong:** Pastor, Brown Chapel AME Church; **Steve Burton:** Pastor, Cornerstone Presbyterian Church; **David Daniel, Jr.:** Dallas County Coordinator, Alabama Cooperative Extension System; **Lawrence Wofford:** Selma Chapter President, NAACP & Board Member, Selma Housing Authority; **Aubrey Carter:** Communications Manager, Alabama Power



The Black Belt Community Foundation

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ISSUE 20 | SEPTEMBER 11, 2023 | FOCUS ON THE ARTS



BBCF Honors Sunset of Partnership with Alabama State Council on the Arts

After a 17-year relationship with the Black Belt Community Foundation, the Alabama State Council on the Arts has ended this prolific era that provided a wealth of artistic resources to the people of the Black Belt.



Arts Council member Dr. Tina Naremore Jones, Sheryl Threadgill of BAMA Kids, & BBCF President Felecia Lucky at a reception in Selma.

Since 2006, the BBCF has been a grantee of the Council on the Arts, allowing them to directly nurture the development of the arts in the 12 Black Belt counties in their service area. According to BBCF president Felecia Lucky, "the BBCF has been the primary outreach arm, serving as a cultural cornerstone for the people of the Black Belt. The resources from the State Council

on the Arts allowed BBCF to facilitate immeasurable impact on the citizens of the Black Belt in support of maintaining their rich and diverse artistic heritage. The people will miss the access to the arts this productive partnership provided over the years."

The Black Belt Arts Initiative (established in 2006) was the result of the partnership between BBCF, the Youth & Cultural Committee, the Black Belt Action Commission, and the Alabama State Council on the Arts. The BBAI provided opportunities for citizens in the Black Belt region to be exposed to and participate in the arts through collaborations with local schools and community-based organizations. With a focus on efficient and effective stewardship, the BBAI helped these organizations flourish.

During its' 17-year tenure, over \$2 million was awarded through BBAI Arts Grants to support various arts activities across BBCF's twelve-county service area. BBCF Community Engagement Officer Erica Williams states, "We are grateful for the relationships forged because of the support of the Alabama Council on the Arts. The citizens of the Black Belt have benefitted greatly, especially the children. The arts open doors through cultural self-expression and artistic exposure, in a way nothing else can. A community without organized arts cannot reach its full potential."

BBCF is a very necessary part of building and sustaining the arts ecosystem in Alabama's Black Belt and will continue its dedication to supporting the arts by seeking local, national, corporate and foundation donor dollars. If you would like to support the arts in the Black Belt region, please consider making a donation today, visit: bit.ly/bbcf-donate and be sure to designate 'BBCF Arts Program' as the purpose for your donation.

\$2M
INVESTED IN ARTS
IN THE BLACK BELT

677
ARTS GRANTS
AWARDED SINCE 2006

- ART IMPACTING LIVES -

Over the past 17 years, the Black Belt Arts Initiative has granted funds to a variety of organizations, allowing them to bring quality arts events, festivals and educational opportunities to residents of the Black Belt. The photos below show a fraction of the impact made on thousands of children and adults throughout the Black Belt Region.





The Black Belt Community Foundation

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The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 21 | SEPTEMBER 25, 2023 | FOCUS ON RESEARCH



BBCF Helps Lead Meaningful Research Supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Black Belt Community Foundation has a long history of collaboration with and support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), including disaster relief and sustaining the operations of the BBCF.

Since 2017, the BBCF has engaged with RWJF through their Interdisciplinary Research Leaders (IRL) program. The IRL was created by RWJF to bring together researchers, community foundations, and community members to engage in applied research in support of a Culture of Health rooted in equity, leading to living longer, healthier lives. To date, BBCF has been a co-leader in three IRL projects directly engaging Black Belt counties in Alabama.



Led by the 2017 IRL fellows, the RCRC initiated the Sowing Seeds project to encourage the development & enhancement of food production as well as to provide farming training and education.

From 2017-2020, BBCF served as the fiscal agent for an IRL project based in Marengo County. This project focused on health, health equity, and the culture of health with the intent of connecting production agriculture, land ownership, and cooperative development to traditional knowledge. Using a community-based, participatory approach, lead researchers listened and learned the “true” needs of the community by establishing the

Community Resilience Council (CRC) and becoming “co-learners” in the process. In March 2020, with additional funding, the CRC became the Regional Community Resilience Council (RCRC) and initiated the “Sowing Seeds Project”. This outreach project served the African American communities in Marengo and surrounding counties encouraging food production, farming education and health equity.

Since 2021, the BBCF has continued its collaboration with the IRL in Wilcox County. Two studies (a second one initiated in 2022) address the issues of childhood obesity, racism and rural communities as they impact Head Start families with children ages birth to five years. Based on their findings, these projects intend to help build community power and modify the structures that cause childhood obesity.



BBCF Head Start provides nutrition services that educate the child, family, and community. A primary goal is to help children maintain healthy weights by increasing physical activity while reducing the number of overweight children.

“The collaboration between the BBCF and RWJF has proven to be a tremendous asset to Alabama’s Black Belt and RWJF’s work to develop a Culture of Health,” says BBCF President and current IRL Fellow, Felecia Lucky. “BBCF looks forward to continued applied research projects and other collaborations with RWJF in an effort to enhance the lives of members of the local community.”

Support for this research was provided by grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Interdisciplinary Research Leaders program. Interdisciplinary Research Leaders is a national program of the RWJF led by the University of Minnesota. The Black Belt Community Foundation is supported in part by grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.

Sources: irleaders.org, irleaders.org/cohort/2017-2020, and irleaders.org/cohort/2021-2024.

— ALABAMA BLACK BELT— INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH LEADERS

Cohort Two: 2017-2020



GRANT AWARD
\$350K

Team Members: Marcus Bernard (left), Veronica Womack (middle), & Tracy McCurdy (right)
Grant Period: Oct. 1, 2017 - Sept. 30, 2020
IRL Theme: Individual & Community Resilience
Project Title: Resilience and Food Security in Black Belt Alabama Through Land-Based Cooperative Economics and Communal Landholdings

Cohort Six: 2021-2024



Team Members: Felecia Lucky (left), Lilanta Joy Bradley (middle), & Jen Nickelson (right)
Grant Period: Oct. 31, 2021 - Oct. 30, 2024
IRL Theme: Structural Racism
Project Title: Centering the lived experience of Head Start families to investigate intersections of structural racism, rurality, & childhood obesity

GRANT AWARD
\$78K

GRANT AWARD
\$125K

Team Members: Felecia Lucky (left), Lilanta Joy Bradley (middle), & Jen Nickelson (right)
Grant Period: May 14, 2022 - Oct. 30, 2024
IRL Theme: Structural Racism
Project Title: Centering Head Start families to investigate intersections of structural racism, rurality, & childhood obesity



The Black Belt Community Foundation

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The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 22 | OCTOBER 10, 2023 | FOCUS ON SCHOLARSHIP



2023 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT – LaNiyah Anderson –

Graduating high school seniors in Marengo County, AL who were accepted or applying to college had the opportunity to apply for the 2023 William & Geraldine Curry Scholarship for Academic and Community Leadership. This year's winner, as selected by the scholarship committee, was **LaNiyah Anderson**, a graduate of Amelia Love Johnson High School in Thomaston, Alabama.



LaNiyah Anderson (pictured center) was presented with the 2023 William and Geraldine Curry Scholarship at her high school's awards day on May 15, 2023.

Ms. Anderson plans to follow her dream of playing basketball at Wallace State Community College in Selma. As an accomplished dual enrollment student, she has already completed 50% of the coursework for Wallace State. She has also participated in volleyball and track. She was accepted to the more than 30 schools she applied to and received over 15 scholarship offers. In her journey to becoming a servant leader, she has future plans to study Dentistry and to return to her hometown to provide dental services to the elderly and youth.

Legacy of Reverend William Curry Honored Through Scholarship

Marengo County's favorite son, William Curry, was a native and lifelong resident of Linden, AL. It is only fitting that the memory of this servant leader was enshrined in a scholarship for Black Belt youth in 2019 by lifelong friend Dr. Art Dunning and wife Karen Baynes-Dunning.

Reverend Curry, an ordained minister with the A.M.E. Zion church, lived his faith in service to his community. As valedictorian of his Linden Academy class, William displayed his gifts of intellect and discipline at an early age. After completing his military service in the U.S. Army, he returned to segregated Linden in the Jim Crow south, undaunted by the challenges ahead. Rev. Curry served as a city councilman, school board member, and little league coach.

Given his enduring commitment to the citizens of Marengo County, especially the youth, his Linden Academy classmates Mr. Taylor Jones and Dr. Art Dunning were inspired to conceive the William and Geraldine Curry Academic and Community Leadership Scholarship. "Mr. Curry's passion to uplift the youth of Marengo County was unwavering," said Dunning. "He never minced words when confronting some of our society's most challenging obstacles to success. We want to make his name, his work and his legacy remembered."

When seeking a home for the scholarship, the Black Belt Community Foundation (BBCF) was contacted and agreed to serve as the supporting organization. According to BBCF president Felecia Lucky, "This scholarship was designed to enhance the lives of youth in Marengo County and the Black Belt by awarding scholarships and creating internships and opportunities for these students to return to the Black Belt. As a result, the life and legacy so brightly established by Rev. Curry continues."

You are invited to join us in honoring this servant of the Black Belt by contributing to the Curry Scholarship fund by visiting blackbeltfound.org/donate and selecting the "William & Geraldine Curry Scholarship" option in the designation drop down menu.

SUPPORT THE WILLIAM & GERALDINE CURRY SCHOLARSHIP FUND



Let's support future servant leaders like LaNiyah through the William & Geraldine Curry Scholarship Fund. You can support the future of this scholarship by visiting: blackbeltfound.org/donate and selecting the "William & Geraldine Curry Scholarship" option in the designation drop down menu. Or simply use the fast TEXT-TO-GIVE option from your cell phone by sending a text message to 334-378-3700 specifying your giving amount and the word "Curry".



Pictured above (left to right): Former classmates and lifelong friends Rev. William Curry, Johnnie Perkins, Dr. Art Dunning, & Taylor Jones



The Black Belt Community Foundation

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The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 23 | OCTOBER 23, 2023 | FOCUS ON SOUTHERN BLACK GIRLS



Southern Black Girls and Women's Consortium

The Southern Black Girls and Women's Consortium (Southern Black Girls, SBGWC) is a collective of Black women in philanthropy, activism and girls' work, who hold deep roots in movement-building. Southern Black Girls was established in 2017 via a strong partnership between the Black Belt Community Foundation and three additional anchor institutions, (the Appalachian Community Fund, the Fund for Southern Communities, and the TruthSpeaks Innovation Foundation) to provide resources and opportunities for Black girls and women in the South. Fed up with reports confirming that Black girls and women receive less than one percent of the \$4.8 billion in philanthropic investments in the south, Southern Black Girls launched the Black Girls Dream Fund to embody their mission and raise \$100 million over the next decade to financially empower the goals of Black girls and women.



From left to right, SBGWC founders: LaTosha Brown, Co-Founder of the SBGWC and Black Voters Matter; Felecia Lucky, President of the Black Belt Community Foundation; Margo Miller, Executive Director of the Appalachian Community Fund; Alice Jenkins, Executive Director of the Fund for Southern Communities

"Black girls and women are still fighting for the rights, resources and recognition they deserve," says Felecia Lucky, BBCF President. "Through our work, we are able to fill this vital funding gap and improve the quality of life for generations of Black girls and women." To date, they have already awarded \$2.2 million to 71 organizations and special projects across 12 southern states – Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The Joy is our Journey Dream Bus Tour is a free event specifically designed for Black girls, young women, and gender-expansive youth, between the ages of 12-24, as a safe space to connect and exhale. A mini-festival experience, each tour stop features several exciting interactive workshops and programming centered around health and beauty, arts and culture, entrepreneurship, S.T.E.M., and dream-building. In partnership with local community organizations, each event is held outdoors and features music, food trucks, game stations, swag bags, giveaways and so much more!



SBGWC partnered with music artist Megan Thee Stallion's Pete and Thomas Foundation for the 2022 tour, which was an exciting month-long caravan that journeyed through multiple cities in five southern states including Atlanta, GA, Elaine, AR, Little Rock, AR, Selma, AL, Wilcox County, AL, Livingston, AL, Jackson, MS, Houston, TX and Birmingham, AL.

The next The Joy is our Journey Dream Bus Tour will take place in Summer 2024.

Sources: 1billion4blackgirls.org (9/10/20); blackenterprise.com (8/19/22); southernblackgirls.org; Photos courtesy of Intown Imagery

"We believe Black women & girls hold authentic & true solutions to the challenges present in our lives. My vision for SBGWC is to elevate the voices & leadership of women & girls & to bring those solutions to light"

– Malika Berry Rogers, Executive Director of SBGWC

- APPLY NOW -

#BlackGirlJoyChallenge

The #BlackGirlJoyChallenge is back and better than ever! This time, we are partnering with Megan Thee Stallion's Pete & Thomas Foundation and giving girls, young women, or gender-expansive youth between the ages of 12-24 an opportunity to win \$550! We invite you to spread joy to yourself, your friends, your family, and your community by applying.



The #BlackGirlJoyChallenge promotes JOY as a vital element of mental health and self-care, and we want YOU to be a part of the movement. If you are a Southern girl aged 12-24 residing in one of the 13 southern states, this is your opportunity to make a difference!

Apply today and share your plans to bring joy to your community for a chance to win a \$550 challenge award. Applications are open until **October 25th**. Learn more, apply now, and join us in spreading JOY: blackgirljoychallenge.org

95%

of Black Girl Joy Awardee respondents reported that SBGWC introduced them to **joy** as a self-care & mental health strategy



The Black Belt Community Foundation

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The Black Belt Bulletin

ISSUE 24 | NOVEMBER 6, 2023 | SPOTLIGHT ON ARTS GRANTS



— 2023 BBAI Grantees —

Bullock County

- » 'Paint the Town with Dogs & Cats' Mural – Bullock Co. Humane Society
- » After School Music Program – Chilly's ICE Cool Band

Choctaw County

- » 'Female Deer Running in the Wild' Mural – Saiasi Foundation
- » Dr. Shelia's Art in the Park – WR McGrew Outreach Development and Education Program

Dallas County

- » Photographic Nights of Selma Festival – ArtsRevive CDC
- » The Music & Story-Telling Festival – Bridge Crossing Jubilee
- » Summer Camp Experience – Fathers of St. Edmund, Southern Missions, Inc.
- » The West Dallas Antique Tractor Show – Orrville Volunteer Fire Dept.

Greene County

- » Arts and Crafts 2.0 – Center For Rural Family Development
- » Art Sampler Showcase – Eutaw Housing Authority Enrichment Program
- » Performing Arts Experiences – Girl Scout Troop 408
- » Black Belt Folk Roots Festival – Society of Folk Arts & Culture

Hale County

- » Outdoor Classroom Space at Magnolia Grove – Black Belt Workshop

Lowndes County

- » The Okra Festival – R.E.A.C.H. (Rural Enrichment Assessing Community Hands)

Macon County

- » "History in the Macon" – Alpha Nu Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
- » Workshops for Practical Arts & Crafts – Too Good for Drugs Photojournalism
- » Rhythm & Blueberry Festival – Tuskegee Macon Co. Community Foundation
- » "Remembering Sammy" – Tuskegee Repertory Theatre, Inc.

Marengo County

- » Jazz Concert to Kick-off Christmas on the River – Two Rivers Arts Council

Perry County

- » Arts Education Programs – West Perry-Marion Arts and Crafts

Pickens County

- » The Kuumbian African Dance & Drum Ensemble – Pickensville Community Center Council

Sumter County

- » The Coleman Arts Summer Program – Coleman Center for the Arts
- » Purchasing Supplies for Summits & Camps – Divine Girls Coalition
- » Expanding the West Alabama Poetry Project – UWA Foundation

Wilcox County

- » BAMA Kids Cultural Arts Explosion II – BAMA Kids, Inc.
- » Arts Programs and Supplies – Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center
- » Museum Field Trips – Freedom Quilting Bee Legacy
- » Gallery Lighting & Art Display Equipment – Wilcox ArtWorks

2023 Arts Grantees Emphasize Artistic Expression



Black Belt Artist, Megan Foose, stands next to the mural that she designed and painted on the side of Hilltop Grill in Union Springs, AL.

In 2023, the Black Belt Arts Initiative (BBAI) funded a total of 28 public art installations, workshops, festivals, classes and more, emphasizing the importance of artistic expression across the Alabama Black Belt. Recently, the Bullock County Humane Society, a 2023 BBAI grantee, unveiled a large-scale mural as part of their 'Paint the Town With Dogs and Cats' program. Through art, they are seeking to reach the younger population to "begin the education of responsible pet ownership and also to instill pride in the community in which they live," showing the power of art to both bring communities together, while also addressing pressing needs and providing education. The mural, a large, expressive painting of a cat and dog, with messages to 'Save a Life, Spay, Neuter, and Adopt', was painted by local professional artist Megan Foose with assistance from her daughter and fellow artist, Ellen, who recently graduated from Kennesaw State with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA). The Black Belt is incredibly fortunate to be home to a variety of talented artists and legacies, and the BBAI grants help to highlight those artists in both traditional and nontraditional ways.

A similar BBAI grant-funded mural was recently unveiled in Gilbertown, AL, by the Saiasi Foundation. Gilbertown is a rural community with a population hovering around 700 and this beautiful female deer mural was painted on a building at Gilbertown Walking Trail park with the goal of inviting the community & visitors to appreciate the beauty and importance of deer and the landscape and to create a subliminal sense of care for these creatures.



The Gilbertown mural portrays a beautiful, life-sized, deer running in its natural habitat.

The 4th Annual Photographic Nights of Selma, an additional BBAI grant-funded program, was held the first weekend of November, highlighting photography as an art form. Through the power of art, this festival is building bonds of friendship as it crosses a multitude of boundaries and allows people to come together to better understand each other. The event included the work of more than 2 dozen international photographers, seen through exhibitions, screenings, and various presentations, all free and open to the public.

Other grant-funded projects include an upcoming Arts Sampler Showcase from the Eutaw Housing Authority and the Annual 'Christmas on the River' Musical Extravaganza in Demopolis the first Saturday of December. The diversity of organizations and arts projects funded emphasizes the BBCF's commitment to meeting the needs of their communities through artistic opportunities and underscores the ways that the visual arts can bridge gaps, through murals, photography, and so much more.



Group photo of the 2023 Black Belt Arts Initiative grantees after they were presented with their awards at a ceremony in Selma, AL on May 20, 2023.

IMPACT ON ALABAMA

The Black Belt Arts Initiative proudly funded 28 projects this year, totaling \$87,400. From public art installations to workshops, festivals and more, this funding makes a significant impact in our communities.



\$87.4K
DISTRIBUTED TO BLACK BELT ORGANIZATIONS



28
BLACK BELT GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS



The Black Belt Community Foundation

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ISSUE 25 | NOVEMBER 20, 2023 | FOCUS ON FUNDRAISING



BBCF's Throw & Go Contest Kicks Off the Holiday Season

In America, Thanksgiving Day is celebrated as the true start of the holiday season. In Alabama, we take it one step further. Thanksgiving Weekend is equally shared between the traditional family celebration and the annual Iron Bowl (The University of Alabama vs Auburn University Football Game).



LaSonja Richardson, 2017 Throw & Go winner, prepares to throw the pass to win her tickets – the 12 yards is symbolic of the number of counties BBCF serves.

Since 2016, the Black Belt Community Foundation has been proud to usher in the holiday season early by sponsoring the annual "Throw & Go Contest", a fundraiser created by the Community Associates to support grant programs. Contestants participate by giving a \$5.00 donation for a ticket, which creates an entry for them into the prize drawing. All the tickets are placed in a container, and a member of the BBCF Board of Directors randomly selects one ticket. The selected ticket holder then has the chance to participate in the "Throw & Go Skills Contest", where they get three tries to complete a 12-yard pass to a BBCF staff/board member in order to win the coveted prize of two Iron Bowl tickets!

This year, BBCF carried on the tradition by conducting the Throw & Go Contest drawing on November 6, 2023. The winner is Larry Childers of Chilton County! BBCF President, Felecia Lucky, representing Mr. Childers, completed the 12-yard pass to a BBCF Board member and officially won Mr. Childers his prize, which he will use to attend the game in Auburn, AL on Saturday, November 25, 2023.

The success of the Throw & Go Contest is directly attributed to the hard work and dedication of the Community Associates. By reaching deeply into each of their counties, Community Associates have been able to sell over 12,000 tickets since 2016! "This contest has given BBCF another way to engage with the community by sponsoring a highly anticipated event, with an awesome prize to boot," states Reverend Chris Spencer, BBCF Director of Community Engagement.

Since the inception of the Contest, generous donors have provided BBCF tickets for the winner, at each of the alternating Iron Bowl sites (Bryant-Denny Stadium or Jordan-Hare Stadium). BBCF salutes 'Super Iron Bowl Ticket Donor' and Auburn businessman Mark Langley. Langley sponsored 2017 Iron Bowl tickets for the Contest winner and continued generously donating tickets (when AU hosted at Jordan-Hare) for many subsequent years. BBCF also salutes Contest 'Super Ticket Buyer', Harold Shambley of Mitchellville, MD. Shambley has been our largest ticket buyer each year, which has raised thousands of dollars for the Contest.

The BBCF would like to offer a **special acknowledgement** to the Community Associates from Bullock, Dallas, Lowndes, Perry, Sumter, and Wilcox counties for their over and above ticket sales that will help fund community grants in 2024.

BBCF looks forward to next year's Throw & Go Contest. Ticket sales will be announced prior to the November 23, 2024 Iron Bowl. Mark the date and don't forget to buy your tickets!

THROW & GO CONTEST WINNERS – 2016-2023 –



2016: Dewayne Murdock, Marengo Co.



2017: LaSonja Richardson, Pickens Co.

2018: Jennifer Giles/Dwayne Hudson*, Bullock Co.

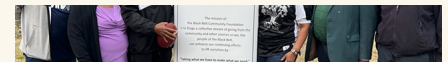
**Super Ticket Buyer, Harold Shambley won the initial drawing and donated the prize back to facilitate a second winner(s).*

2019: Linda Hall, Lowndes Co.

2020: No contest due to COVID

2021: Ralph Stokes*, Marietta, GA

**Originally from Montgomery, AL, Ralph Stokes was one of the 1st Black football players to play for Paul "Bear" Bryant at the University of Alabama, playing running back from 1971 - 74.*



2022: Dwayne Hudson, Bullock Co.

2023: Larry Childers, Chilton Co.


\$60K
RAISED FOR COMMUNITY
GRANTS SINCE 2016


12K
TICKETS SOLD OVER
THE PAST 8 YEARS



The Black Belt Community Foundation

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ISSUE 26 | DECEMBER 4, 2023 | FOCUS ON BBCF HEADQUARTERS



New BBCF Headquarters To Be Complete January 2024

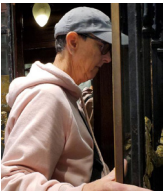
The BBCF is very near to having a long-anticipated dream come true, just in time for the 20th anniversary of the organization. The new headquarters at 410 Church Street in Selma, AL will replace BBCF's current location on Lauderdale Street, and will house staff, including Head Start administration.



The front of the 410 Church Street building includes a large porch area accessible via stairs and a ramp for wheelchair access.

After purchasing the property on Church Street, BBCF continued to work hard towards fulfilling the dream of having a headquarters that not only serviced the staff, but one that was a source of pride for the entire Black Belt community. Though Covid-19 halted plans for renovation for two years, the project got back on track, resulting in a refurbished facility with a "brand new" interior. "Working with contractors to redesign and build out office and meeting

spaces was an arduous task. But we knew the results would mean so much to so many in our community" stated BBCF Chief of Staff, Serena Low, who managed the property's interior rebuild.



Exterior project manager, Susie Manning, inspecting building materials.

After the interior construction was completed, exterior refurbishments began in August 2023. Replacing all of the windows, security doors, cutting down overgrown trees, improving landscaping, building new fences, along with designing and pouring a brand-new sidewalk and parking lot was the primary focus of Susie Manning, the Church Street exterior project manager. "Working with neighbors, contractors, vendors and officials from the city of Selma continues to be rewarding because everyone is vested in the success of BBCF," states Manning.

In addition to the interior and exterior major renovations, the new headquarters is to be equipped with all amenities needed to make the space functional for the needs of the staff, Community Associates, board members, and residents of the Black Belt. "We intend for the new headquarters to serve as a source of pride for our entire community. By incorporating the works of Black Belt and other southern artists, community members will hopefully see themselves and their history reflected in the best light possible when they visit. The headquarters is intended to be a fresh, new and inviting space that will support the work of BBCF while servicing the needs of our community", according to BBCF President, Felecia Lucky.

A formal ribbon-cutting and Open House will be announced to the public in early 2024.



Work is currently being completed on the exterior of the building, including getting the new parking lot ready for paving and building new fences.

"By incorporating the works of Black Belt and other southern artists, community members will hopefully see themselves and their history reflected in the best light possible when they visit." – Felecia Lucky, BBCF President



BBCF board member, Martha Lockett, evaluates art at the Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center in Camden, AL. Artwork made by local Black Belt and other southern artists was hand selected to adorn the walls of the new headquarters.

- MORE SPACE -

MORE RESOURCES TO SHARE

The newly renovated building at 410 Church Street has an abundance of private offices, both large and small conference rooms, a fully equipped kitchen, and a special prayer space. These resources can be enjoyed by all BBCF staff as well as Community Associates, board members, and residents of the Black Belt.

240%

The new office space is approximately 240% larger than our previous building!
New building: ~4760 sq ft
Old building: ~1400 sq ft



Thanks for reading.

As long as there are topics to cover, the Black Belt Bulletin will remain in production to tell the story of the BBCF. If you have information about a potential bulletin topic or story you'd like to see covered in future issues of the bulletin, please email the BBCF Data Impact Center:

communications@blackbeltfound.org

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