



The Black Belt Community Foundation

DATA IMPACT CENTER

The Black Belt Bulletin

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The Founders' Perspective

May 1, 2024 not only marked the 20th anniversary of the Black Belt Community Foundation, it was a rare opportunity to receive "the story" first hand from 3 of BBCF's founding members who all served as board chairs. Dr. Carol P. Zippert, Senator Hank Sanders, and (former) Alabama Lt. Governor George McMillan each graced the podium and shared their experiences and perspective on "the story of the founding of BBCF".

Their remembrances provided context for the anniversary and ribbon cutting ceremony honoring the new BBCF headquarters, a foundation owned property. The program's mistress of ceremonies, Felecia Lucky (BBCF President/CEO), wove the threads of each speaker's story into a tapestry of "first-hand accounts" that were a gift to each audience member present.

Dr. Carol Zippert, the founding board chairperson said, "Why am I here? Why are you here? I'm here to tell the story. Who's going to tell our story if we don't? And that is why I'm here to tell the story...I want to always be in the story as well." Dr. Zippert went on to inform the audience that the beginning efforts of the foundation included 16 volunteers going to all of the Black Belt counties in their service area and asking "What are your assets? What are the good things you have? The assets are going to build the community foundation." Dr. Zippert closed by providing, "Those hearts you see in the symbol (the BBCF mother tree logo)? We are the hearts in that tree that go down to the roots."



Dr. Carol Zippert telling the BBCF story to the crowd at the May 1st Grand Opening Ceremony & Block Party.



Senator Hank Sanders addresses the crowd at May 1st event.

Senator Hank Sanders gave the history of the precursor of BBCF, reminding us that from 1999-2004 "roots were already being planted". In 1999, The Selma Collaborative (a range of community organizations) was informed by Dr. Carol Zippert of the idea of a community foundation as presented at a conference she attended. The Selma Collaborative incorporated the Black Belt Community Foundation in 2000. Subsequently, the members of the Collective met with Dr. David Wilson (then Auburn University vice-president), George McMillan, and Alabama Power's Julian Smith who were intending to form the Black Belt Foundation. In 2004, the two groups came together and removed the legal status of "Inc." from BBCF. According to Senator Sanders, "You see, taking what we have to make what we need, that was my mother's, what she always said...As Pickens County bluesman Willie King said, 'y'all (BBCF) change anything you want to, but you can't change that (motto)'.

Finally, (former) Alabama Lt. Gov. George McMillan conveyed that BBCF was a reflection of the communities it served from the outset. "Literally, we spent 2 years at Wallace Community College, and we sat around the table...and y'all cannot imagine everything we discussed...I don't think any community foundation has had a better genesis than did the BBCF and one of the most important parts was having Community Associates."

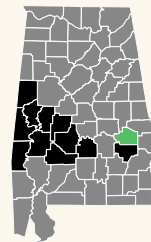
If a community is remembered by the collection of stories it passes down, the Black Belt Community Foundation will be both affectionately and accurately portrayed as an enduring organization that "took what it had and with the community made what it needed".



Former Lt. Gov. George McMillan speaks at May 1st event.

SPOTLIGHT ON - MACON COUNTY -

Macon County is located in the east-central portion of the state and is one of the 12 Black Belt counties serviced by BBCF. It is home to one of the most famous small towns in Alabama, the city of Tuskegee, which also serves as the first and only county seat.



MACON CO. HAS
A TOTAL AREA OF

614
SQUARE MILES



Prairies, plains, and pine trees describe the physical layout of Macon County. The Tallapoosa River, with its 151 species of fish & mussels, meanders throughout. It is home to the Tuskegee National Forest whose 11,000 acres make it the smallest national forest in the US.



MACON CO. HAS
A POPULATION OF

19.5K

With a population of just under 20k, Macon County is 80% African-American, 18% White and 2% Hispanic. Rich in culture and history, Macon County boasts many sites of national and human interests. Education for African-Americans is evidenced by the renovated Shiloh-Rosenwald School and the enduring presence of Tuskegee University. On the Tuskegee campus, visitors can tour Booker T. Washington's home, the George Washington Carver museum, and Moton Field, home of the Tuskegee Airmen. Rosa Parks, Lionel Richie, and Robin Roberts count themselves among the many famous people born in Macon County.

The BBCF is active in Macon County through the disbursement of arts and community grants along with other civic projects. Those living in Macon County can access the resources of the BBCF or donate to the organization through one of your local Community Associates.



Khandi Flowers
BBCF Board Secretary,
Macon County

BBCF MACON CO. COMMUNITY ASSOCIATES:

Lionel Armstead, Betty Broadnax, Jacquelyn Carlisle, Connie Dacus, Khandi Flowers, Wythena Gullette, Linda Hallmark, Norma Jackson, Terrence Johnson, Kimberly Maddox, Susie Manning, Tia-Lennora Pierrot, Jalil Surge, Melanie Tolbert, Jackie Walker, Jamila Walker, Sawanda Wilson

BBCF MACON CO. 2023 GRANT RECIPIENTS:

(ARTS GRANTS & COMMUNITY GRANTS)

Abstractions by Jah Jah
Alpha Nu Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
Babi-Bibs and Blankets International
Too Good for Drugs Photojournalism
Tuskegee Macon Co. Community Foundation
Tuskegee Repertory Theatre, Inc.

Sources: encyclopediaofalabama.org (5/2/23); alafrikanamerican.com (5/4/24)