



South Cumberland Community Fund



Moving the Needle to Improve Health Outcomes Across the Plateau



Newsletter

Fall 2021

The Vision of South Cumberland Community Fund is that the Plateau be a place of hope and prosperity for all its residents and communities, inspired by the Fund’s philanthropic and regional leadership.

A Message from the New Community Development Director

Grundy County is my home that I love. My ancestors helped found the county, my grandfathers worked the coal mines, and my father was a school principal. When I was two years old and after a career change for my father, our family moved to Colorado, where I grew up. Most summers, though, I was back on “the Mountain.” My childhood memories of this place are of hot garden-fresh meals with all the family gathered together, cool dips in the lake, and warm evenings catching lightning bugs.

When I was 28 years old I moved back to Tennessee and pursued a career in K-12 education. I eventually returned to Grundy County and became more and more aware of the struggles faced by so many on the Plateau due to the closing of the coal mines and railroad, and the decline of the timber industry. In 2011 I attended a *Vision* meeting hosted by the University of the South, and felt encouraged by the many individuals who came together from across the region to share their visions for prosperous and thriving rural communities. From this meeting came the inspiration to establish SCCF.



Motivated by this new initiative on the Plateau, in 2012 I transitioned into nonprofit grants management for programs serving the South Cumberland Plateau, including the South Cumberland Health Network and Volunteer Behavioral Health. Through my work with these organizations, and later with South Cumberland Plateau VISTA Project, I was introduced to the many change agents across the Plateau who are engaging their organizations in innovative ways of addressing public health challenges. These organizations emphasize the importance of addressing social determinants of health (SDOH) in order to reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes. Local organizations address SDOH by building upon assets already existing in our Plateau communities; tapping into the strengths of its people, the natural environment, and local institutions; strengthening connections and relationships; and working collaboratively around shared goals.

SCCF has been a strong partner to the organizations working to improve health outcomes on the Plateau. SCCF provides funding for health initiatives, supports organizations through its co-sponsorship of the AmeriCorps VISTA program, offers leadership training, and hosts *Community Conversations*.

These efforts are unequivocally moving the needle to improve health outcomes across the Plateau. Grundy County’s health outcome ranking among the 95 Tennessee counties has improved from 95th in 2012 to 92nd today. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)

Through the collaborative, creative work of so many organizations, and their partnerships with South Cumberland Community Fund, our home—the South Cumberland Plateau—is becoming a place of hope and prosperity.

- Katie Goforth, *Community Development Director*

SCCF Partners with AmeriCorps VISTA Project to Offer Free Meals to Students in Three Counties

South Cumberland Plateau AmeriCorps VISTAs (Volunteers in Service to America) distributed more than 60,900 free meals this summer, benefiting children, families, and the entire Plateau with much appreciated food and participation by the community. In addition, literacy and enrichment materials were offered to children at each meal site to keep them engaged in learning and to prevent academic “summer slide,” especially in light of the lack of in-person summer camps and summer school due to COVID. The popular USDA-sponsored South Cumberland Summer Meal Program (SMP) is made possible by a partnership between the SCP VISTA program and McClurg Dining Hall at the University of the South.

This year’s SMP was further enhanced by the support of a broad swath of the Plateau community, including local school principals and staff, and many community contributors and volunteers representing 19 nonprofit and civic organizations on and off the Mountain. The program was supported by 18 Summer Associate VISTAs and Hunger Relief VISTA Sarah Edmonds to alleviate food insecurity in children during the summer months, and operated from 17 meal distribution sites in Franklin, Marion, and Grundy counties. The SCP AmeriCorps VISTA program is one of the largest in the state of Tennessee and is co-hosted on the Mountain by SCCF and the University of the South.

South Cumberland Plateau AmeriCorps VISTAs hand off meals to some eager customers.



Hunger Relief VISTA Sarah Edmonds waits for her next drive through customer.



SCCF Awards 14 Grants to Plateau Nonprofits in Spring Grants Cycle

Fourteen area nonprofits were the recipients of grants totaling \$88,918 in SCCF's 2021 spring cycle of grant-giving. These grants will fund innovative, sustainable projects, ranging from outdoor learning areas for two elementary schools that adhere to STEM

guidelines to providing 700 transition packages to Grundy County Jail for its reentry program. SCCF also continued its policy of allowing grants for operational support in light of the continuing pandemic.

Folks at Home: \$4,250 - in collaboration with the local organization Compassionate Friends, funding for a "safer" alternative for essential medical transportation for elders.

Marion Animal Resource Connection (MARC): \$4,635 - implementation of a TNR = Trap, Neuter, Return cats program.

Tracy City Elementary School: \$9,223 - creation of an outdoor learning space to qualify as a STEM-designated school and promote inclusive play for the community.

Mountain T.O.P.: \$10,000 - general operations funding that includes assistance with full-time staff health insurance costs.

Mountain Goat Trail Alliance: \$5,000 - construction of a short connector which will allow the trail to connect with the current TDOT road narrowing project in Sewanee.

Grundy County Housing Authority: \$6,000 - replace an existing gazebo and add benches on an extension of the Mountain Goat Trail to provide residents and other walkers a place to rest.

Beersheba Springs Medical Clinic: \$2,850 - roof and siding repairs as well as exterior improvements for the Beersheba Springs Medical Clinic Cottage.

Sewanee Elementary School: \$4,735 - an outdoor STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) learning center to allow teachers to better address the Tennessee NextGen Science Standards.

Monteagle Elementary School: \$4,725 - purchase and installation of a much-needed front valance for the auditorium stage to enhance school and community presentations.

Coalmont Elementary School: \$5,000 - a literacy project designed to develop and foster a love of literacy and a mindset of lifelong learning.

Grundy County Sheriff's Office: \$6,000 - 700 "transition care packages" for the reentry program, including a hygiene kit and a resource guide with information for financial assistance, housing, and other services.

Town of Tracy City: \$10,000 - creation of additional parking along the road that provides access to Grundy Forest.

Friends of South Cumberland: \$10,000 - construction of a Nature Play Area to be located at the South Cumberland State Park Visitors Center.



A First for the Plateau: South Cumberland State Park Nature Play Area
 In the 2021 spring grants cycle SCCF awarded Friends of South Cumberland State Park a grant to fund a nature play area at Monteagle's South Cumberland State Park Information and Welcome Center. The popularity of nature play and creative free play is growing among young families, given that this type of play builds confidence, creativity, and a stronger connection to the natural environment while engaging in healthy physical activity. Work on the nature area begins this fall, and the park hopes to have this project completed by next spring in time for annual field trips by 4th graders from schools across the Plateau.

Isaiah 117 House: \$6,500 - installation of a whole-house security system in the new location on the South Cumberland Plateau for the safety and protection of guests.



SCCF Welcomes New Grantee Isaiah 117 House
 Isaiah 117 House provides physical and emotional support in a safe and loving home for children awaiting foster care placement. Currently, there are Isaiah 117 Houses in Indiana and Tennessee, with expansion committees formed in Florida and Virginia. This latest house on the Plateau is supported by Coffee, Franklin, and Grundy counties, and will be staffed by volunteers who will provide children with clean clothes, hygiene items, toys, blankets, and other items that are needed for the transition to their foster home. SCCF is proud to have the opportunity to collaborate with this new partner on the Plateau.

+ Indicates projects that improve access to medical care and healthy lifestyle resources

SCCF Funding Awarded to Health Care Nonprofits Across the Plateau is Seeing Results



A Win-Win for St. Thomas Ascension MHU Client

In 2020, SCCF provided an operations grant to St. Thomas Ascension Mobile Health Unit (MHU). This vehicle visits the Plateau on the second Saturday of every month and offers free medical care, including treatment for acute illnesses, medications, physicals, and flu shots. During a recent visit to the Plateau an uninsured 61-year-old female client visited the clinic, who shared with MHU staff that she was reluctant to ask for help but that her serious health issues had humbled her to the point that she felt she had to reach out to MHU.

During the patient's examination, staff learned that she was paying \$425 a month for a life-saving heart medication. They were able to connect the patient with RxOutreach, a nonprofit mail order pharmacy in Saint Louis, Missouri, with which Ascension Saint Thomas is in partnership. MHU and RxOutreach enabled the patient to obtain this medication at a reduced cost, which allowed her to overcome a serious economic obstacle to her health. This unexpected win-win for the patient, the Mobile Health Unit, and SCCF is one example of the life-changing work that is bringing about improved health results for the residents of the South Cumberland Plateau.

As Director of Grundy Emergency Medical Services Don Hutcheson also serves as Chairman of Grundy County 911 District and Grundy County Medical Investigator.

A Conversation with Don Hutcheson

Grundy EMS Plays a Big Role in Health Care on the South Cumberland Plateau



“SCCF’s work is essential to this community. It has brought about change and improvements in the lifestyles of many Mountain residents over the years.”

area, and many residents rely on GEMS for a multitude of needs. It is not unusual for Hutcheson to be called from the stands while attending a Grundy County High School football game to attend to an injured player, or to receive a call on a Saturday while running personal errands from a community member who asks if

he could drop by to check out a medical issue that has arisen. Hutcheson considers it a privilege to attend to these needs, and says it is just another aspect of working and living in a rural community with limited resources. As Hutcheson said, GEMS has 24 employees who share this commitment to the residents of the Plateau and who community members also turn to in time of need.

In many ways Hutcheson feels that the county is only beginning to scratch the surface in providing good, accessible medical care for the community. He sees a lack of transportation for many residents as a fundamental obstacle to medical care access. Another important issue is encouraging the middle age and elderly population to maintain annual physicals as a way to improve early detection and prevention.

“I wouldn’t live anywhere else,” said Hutcheson. “I love every aspect of my work and feel it is a privilege to serve the people of Grundy County and the surrounding area.”

“I am inspired by the way the people of this community help one another in times of need. This caring for each other that I witness every day is what supports me in my work throughout the region.”

Don Hutcheson, Director of Grundy Emergency Medical Services (GEMS), says that when COVID hit the Plateau full force in March of 2020 the need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for first responders became glaringly apparent, but it was difficult to find supplies. As GEMS staff scrambled to locate resources for this equipment they soon discovered prices had risen astronomically, and they turned to SCCF for help. That month the SCCF board authorized a \$10,000 emergency PPE grant which was awarded to Grundy County Emergency Management Agency to support first responders in the county’s seven fire departments, the Grundy County Sheriff’s Department, the Monteagle and Tracy City police departments, and other important county agencies. The emergency grant was followed by a \$10,000 grant from SCCF’s spring cycle and a \$5,000 SCCF Philanthropy Internship Program grant, both for the purchase of PPE for GEMS. Hutcheson said without SCCF’s assistance the county would have been severely handicapped in providing protection for its first responders.

GEMS plays an important role in this isolated, rural community, not only providing emergency medical care, but is also viewed as a trusted friend to many. As Hutcheson explained, resources for medical care are severely limited in the



88%

Thanks to our wonderful supporters, SCCF has 12% more to raise to reach our 2021 annual fund goal of \$300,000. We have \$35,000 left to raise to meet the SCCF annual budget that provides funding for grants and community development across the Plateau. Please help us get there by visiting www.southcumberlandcommunityfund.org and clicking on the "Support Us" button. Or you may mail your donation to SCCF, P. O. Box 1301, Monteagle, TN 37356.

Make a Donation from Your IRA and Avoid the Tax Bill

Are you 72 years or older and have an IRA? If you do then there is an elegant solution for the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) that becomes a reality at age 72, and which is normally viewed as taxable income. Consider the use of a qualified charitable deduction (QCD) for that required withdrawal. You can donate up to \$100,000 directly from an IRA to a charity without being taxed on the distribution. A QCD can be used to satisfy all or part of your RMD.

Donating IRA funds directly to qualified charities allows the IRA holder or beneficiary to avoid taking possession of the funds and the tax bill that comes with it. Another benefit of the QCD is potentially reducing taxation of other sources such as Social Security and net investment income, and potentially lowering Medicare part B and D premiums.

As always, please consult your financial advisor or tax attorney for more information.

- John Goodson
Goodson Wealth Management
Winchester, TN



Covid Update:

An Evening with Editorial Cartoonist Kal Kallaugher

Due to the current uncertainty concerning gathering in large groups, the SCCF board has decided to move to a drive through/take-away gourmet meal event for the October 2 Fall Fundraiser featuring editorial cartoonist Kal Kallaugher. Participants will be sent a link to the program for the event which will include Kallaugher's pre-recorded presentation, that may be viewed at leisure.

Thank you to our many sponsors and single ticket buyers who stepped up to support this sold-out event. We are deeply grateful to them and all of our supporters for their flexibility and understanding during this challenging time for the nonprofit community.

Thank you to all our donors!



SCCF hosted a get-to-know-you event for Clifftops neighbors at the Club Lake House in Monteagle on August 7, 2021.

Growing Roots is Building Experiences with Grundy High School Students

The nonprofit Growing Roots, headquartered at the new South Cumberland Learning and Development Center (SCLDC) in Tracy City and in partnership with the Building Strong Brains program, provides an innovative approach to area students by providing out-of-the-box, sustainable learning experiences. During the 2020/2021 school year, 20 students from Grundy County High School traveled to SCLDC to participate in the Growing Roots After School Initiative (ASI). With help from community member volunteers, these students built six raised garden beds and planted 26 crop varieties during the 2021 spring semester. Eleven community volunteers dedicated time and energy to the ASI program this year, supervising garden activities and providing tutoring and mentorship to students.

A total of 404.5 hours were served by community members, all while practicing COVID-19 protocols to ensure the safety of students, staff, and volunteers. Every student in the program showed improvement in grades and received positive reports for classroom engagement.

SCCF is proud to have been a part of this project by providing funds to support the construction of the raised garden beds, and for the purchase of three computers for the tutoring program which helped in the virtual learning environment of COVID-19. Congratulations to these hard working students who not only reached their academic goals, but who also provided sustenance for the community.

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SCCF Expands Its Outreach to Plateau Residents to Identify Issues Important to the Community

In October of 2019 SCCF and the University's Office of Civic Engagement co-hosted *Community Conversations* which was attended by more than 140 participants from communities across the Plateau. The purpose of these listening sessions was to identify top priorities for the region to assist in defining the work of SCCF and OCE moving forward. Participants in these conversations were asked to define issues related to health, education, and community/economic development. In a slight departure from SCCF's traditional grants program which provides grants for innovative, sustainable projects, these conversations are intended to identify issues important to the community as a whole and then provide funding to organizations that address those needs. In early fall of 2020 SCCF's community development committee awarded \$34,356 to six innovative programs that address these priorities.

In June of this year a follow-up work session was held via Zoom with *Community Conversations*-funded organizations and other area nonprofits who have a vested interest in these issues, to identify best practices for future efforts. This workshop was led by Karen Proctor, a nationally recognized leader in social innovation and special assistant to the provost at the University of the South. A next important step identified by workshop participants is for each agency to form small client focus groups to drill down into these new projects to explore how they are working as well as ways to improve and build on them. Future community listening events are in the works as well.

"This workshop provided these local leaders with the opportunity to meaningfully reflect on their work during this most difficult time for nonprofits. The key lessons learned and what stated outcomes from the Community Conversations process showed was how important it is to listen to what clients actually need, both in times of crisis and as a common practice as we move into better times."

- Karen Proctor

Community Conversations Funding:

Grundy County Sheriff's Office - Training for staff to better understand mental health issues within the incarcerated population

Grundy Recovery Alliance Community Endeavor (GRACE) - Residency fees for three clients at Mosaic Recovery Center

South Cumberland Health Network - Development of plan to overcome barriers for accessing medicine-assisted treatment of opioid abuse disorder

Sequatchie Valley Head Start - 1,500 books for children to call their own in the ongoing effort to increase childhood literacy

Growing Roots - Construction of sustainable garden beds to promote agricultural-based learning and equipment for culinary instruction

South Cumberland Learning & Development Center - Three desktop computers for high school students enrolled in credit recovery classes

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On the cover: SCCF has partnered this year with numerous nonprofits on the Plateau for better health outcomes, including grants to Grundy Emergency Medical Services for PPE, funding to Growing Roots for community gardens, operations grants to Mountain T.O.P. to support volunteers who make safety improvements to residents' homes, and funding for Tracy City and Monteagle elementary schools for the purchase of mannequins for CPR training.

South Cumberland Community Fund

P. O. Box 1301, Monteagle, TN 37356

2021 South Cumberland Plateau Summer Associate VISTA Program

Eighteen Summer VISTA associates partnered with nonprofit sites across the Plateau to support the well-being of infants, children, and teens; reduce substance abuse; and preserve the history and natural resources of the region.

60,908 Meals Served

5,760 Volunteer Hours

8 Weeks of Service



VISTAs distribute meals in the Sherwood Community for the South Cumberland Summer Meal Program.



The University Farm hosted three VISTAs for their summer service.

