

south cumberland COMMUNITY FUND



SPRING 2024

NEWSLETTER & ANNUAL REPORT

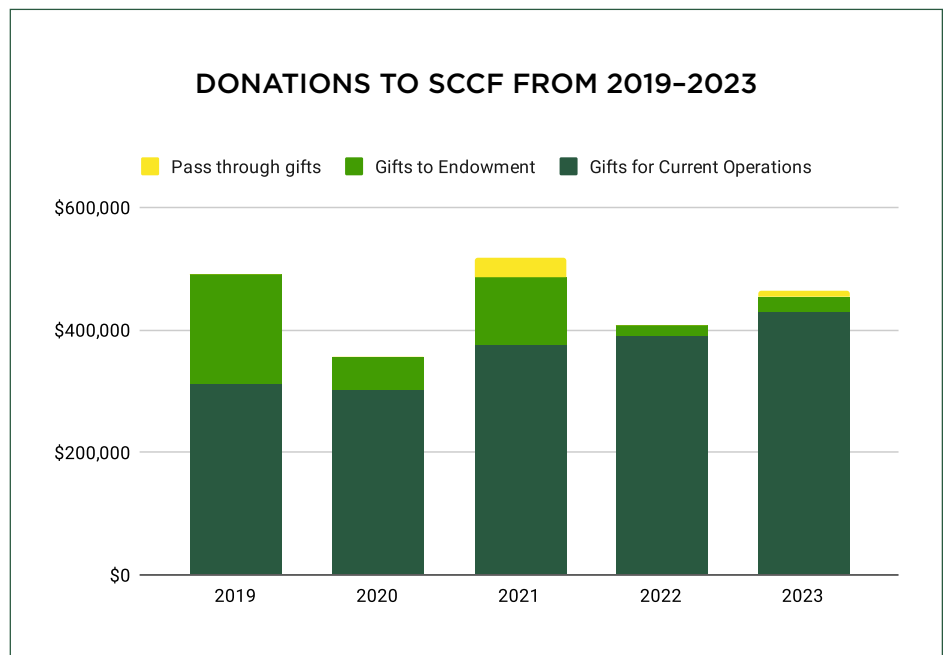
Over the past 10 years, we have funded over \$1.5 million in direct grants to area nonprofits and invested well over \$700,000 in community development work.

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Donations to support current operations have steadily increased over the last five years, enabling the Community Fund to have a greater positive impact on the Plateau. The Endowment Fund balance as of 12/31/2023 is \$1,146,813.

A Letter from the Executive Director

Thank you from all of us at South Cumberland Community Fund.

For the past four years, funds available for current operations of South Cumberland Community Fund have increased by more than 40%, thanks to the support of our donors. That means more money for grants in the community and more resources for the convening and community development work that are both central to our organizational identity and a boon to the community we serve. We cannot thank our donors enough for giving us the ability to be a force for positive change on the South Cumberland Plateau.

In 2023, South Cumberland Community Fund made a record \$212,835 in grants in our service area through four grant rounds. Altogether 35 grants built capacity, created new educational programs, helped build houses, and made people better off through enhanced partner services.

Our other area of operations is in community development, and we were able to expend great energy toward some of our strategic priorities. In 2022, a grant in our collaborative grant round helped launch the Housing Hub, a partnership between Housing Sewanee and Mountain TOP. In 2023, the community development committee, through its housing working group assisted the Housing Hub as it sought to be a standalone 501c3. The initial work of Housing Hub was to provide homeowner (and aspiring homeowner) services. In 2023, the Community Fund helped pilot a new role for the Housing Hub—building new homes and training a new workforce.

Last year, the Community Development Committee also launched a transportation working group, which has focused on developing transportation solutions for the free medical clinics on the Plateau. The working group is getting closer to some workable solutions for transportation on the Plateau every day. In 2024, we are forming a new working group for community health and reenergizing a working group focused on education.

Those working groups are a really important expression of the strategic plan our board adopted in 2022. We recognized that encouraging collaboration, leveraging our philanthropy with other resources, and creating coordinated cross-sector partnerships was going to be more effective to achieve the vision of hope and prosperity for all on the Plateau than making many small, uncoordinated bets.

We are looking forward to 2024 and hope we can count on you to come along with us as we seek to continue building this wonderful community.

— Tom Sanders, Executive Director



Make Lasting Connections Collaborative Grant Projects,

To celebrate the Fund's tenth anniversary in 2022, the board established a one-time board directed grant that focused on collaboration. The grant round was called the "Make Lasting Connections" grant, and, that year, an *ad hoc* grants committee awarded \$50,000 to two collaborative projects: the establishment of a free medical clinic in Tracy City, and the creation of the Housing Hub, an information clearing house for home owners and aspirant home owners.

In 2023, the board authorized \$60,000 for round two of the collaborative grant, "Connect for Lasting Impact." In 2024, the board has essentially made this grant round permanent by tying it to endowment earnings—meaning that the collaborative grant will be pegged at the amount the board elects to transfer from the endowment. By board policy, that amount is 5% of principal, but in practice, the draw will be 4%, based on rules established by the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, which manages the endowment. But what of those first two grants? Has the impact been lasting? Has collaboration grown? In a word, yes.

Health Care for All Who Need It

The Free Medical Clinic in Tracy City has been strongly collaborative, since its inception in 2022. Dr. Tom Phelps, the clinic's founder reported on some of the collaborative results in November:

We have welcomed nearly 200 new patients this year, conducted 518 medical visits, and have seen an enormous amount of untreated pathology... Beth Sperry, N.P. has performed women's examinations, PAP smears, etc. The Breathe Easy mobile CT scanner screened 13 of our patients for early lung cancer, and we are planning to refer patients this month for free mammograms.... We have been joined by a board certified pain specialist, a rheumatologist, an endocrinologist and next summer a pulmonologist and otolaryngologist. Plans for having 2nd year residents from Yale are presently being made as I write this.

Two Years On

One important collaboration has been between the clinic and the Sewanee Molecular Diagnostic Lab, which launched during COVID to meet the University's testing needs.

As Phelps explains, "Within the first quarter of operation of the clinic, it became clear that Hepatitis C was a major cause of illness (and early death) in the mountain community. Fully 10% of our patients were positive for Hepatitis C. Many were previously incarcerated. None of the patients had means to acquire treatment." Phelps is able to secure curative medications for his patients who test positive, but the testing itself can be prohibitively expensive too. The donations of medications are linked to specific people with active infections, so testing is a critical step in bringing the medicine to the community.

That's why, in 2022, Phelps and the Tracy City Free Medical Clinic were awarded a \$10,000 grant from South Cumberland Community Fund to address the acute need for testing and treatment resources for Hepatitis C on the Plateau. When Phelps applied for the grant, he understood that tests would cost about \$450 each, which would mean about twenty people could be tested using grant funds. Through the work of Sheri Lawrence and petitioning the state, over the last year that cost has been reduced to \$85. By collaborating with the Sewanee Molecular Diagnostic Lab, that cost will soon be halved again, making it possible to bring more medicine to the Plateau.

"These stories shine a bright light on the power of philanthropy, when it is focused on collaboration," says Tom Sanders. "Our committees, our board, and our staff are working very hard to understand the critical issues in front of us and to support the collaborations that can make a significant positive difference on the Plateau."



Everyone Has a Home

The Housing Hub has worked hard to create a podcast series that focuses on housing issues in a rural context. Their work gives context to grant writers and other advocates of rural housing. In addition, they have built a website that helps aspirant home owners negotiate a challenging landscape to be able to find resources that can make their home ownership possible in the face of market and interest rate volatility.

In the last few months, the work of the Housing Hub has transformed from an advocacy and services organization to an organization that helps build houses—importantly, through collaboration. A home build is taking place right now through the trades program at Grundy County High School. GCHS students are working on a house in sections that will be moved and installed on a permanent foundation in Altamont. The Housing Hub hopes that this will be the first of a series of houses being built to meet people’s needs.

Housing Hub is also evolving from a collaborative project to an independent housing nonprofit, with the hope of

becoming a Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), which will be eligible for federal grants to bring funding in from outside to address housing shortages. Our Community Fund has been instrumental in making that transition. Two members of the housing working group of the Community Development committee will be board members of the new organization: Lee Limbird and Bob Willems. They have recruited community member Mike Keen to the new board. In fact, the Housing Working group thought long and hard about the best way of making the transition from advocacy to development and determined that creating a CHDO was the best way to bring new resources to the community. Read more about this project on page 10.

Images: Students at Grundy County High School learn new skills while building the shell of the first Housing Hub home.

Philanthropy Interns Advance Local Nonprofits' Community Impact Through Grants Making

South Cumberland Community Fund finished out its 2023 grantmaking at a celebration of the Philanthropy Internship Program with public acknowledgement of \$30,000 in grant funding in November to local nonprofit organizations and government agencies. Through four grant rounds in 2023, the Community Fund made grants totaling over \$212,000, with the Philanthropy Internship Program representing the final grant round of the year.

The Philanthropy Internship Program is a partnership between the Community Fund and the University of the South, where the source of the grants is two endowments at the University, and where students in the program comprise the grants committee. The program is a two-semester course at the University, where students learn broadly about philanthropy in America and apply those lessons to their own grantmaking. Katie Goforth, director of community development for both the Fund and the University, is the instructor for the program. In addition, local philanthropy leaders contribute their time in guest lectures.

This year's student philanthropy interns included Lily Brady (C'24), Kendall Buck (C'24), Adri Silva (C'24), Delana Turner (C'24), Catherine Belser (C'25) and Emma Grace Hendrickson (C'25). "The philanthropy interns really took seriously their roles as grants committee members," said Goforth. "They carefully reviewed the eleven grant applications submitted and researched each grant applicant's organization to better understand the organization, its mission and impact, and its capacity to be successful in implementing its proposed project."

Students gain practical experience in the work of philanthropic foundations. They shadow the Community Fund's grants committee during the Easter semester. They then act as their own mini-foundation in the Advent semester, conducting the grants process and awarding money to advance the impactful work of local nonprofit organizations on the South Cumberland Plateau.

Since 2016, the program has invested over \$200,000 in funding to approximately 30 area nonprofit and government agencies. In 2023, philanthropy interns awarded a total of \$30,000 in funds to nine projects. (listed at right)





BetterFi: \$1,680 project to add an online borrower's portal to BetterFi's new loan platform that will allow borrowers the opportunity to independently keep track of their BetterFi loan data, see the current amount owed on their loan, make payments, and view an updated amortization schedule. Adding an online borrowing portal will also build financial autonomy for the clients, but most importantly build dignity as credit information can be privately accessed without the need to talk to an employee. This ability to access loan information electronically will be beneficial for clients after they repay their BetterFi loan and move to community banks and credit unions as they will already have familiarity with online banking portals.

Folks at Home: \$561 project to implement a lending library that will provide readings on a variety of preventive health topics. Folks at Home serves its members through home and health support for its members, and this lending library, with readings from Harvard Health, will help improve the wellness of the members of F@H.

Grundy County Food Bank: \$5,000 of a \$6,791 project to allow the Grundy County Food Bank to purchase stainless steel tables for the building. In doing so, this will create a sanitary environment for the distribution of groceries. The Grundy County Food bank works diligently to serve roughly 156 households per month.

Housing Sewanee: \$5,000 of a \$47,000 project to support the construction of the third home in the organization's innovative Sherwood Springs development. Housing Sewanee is currently on track to build its 20th home since 1993.

MARC (Marion Animal Rescue Connection): \$1,627 project to control the cat and dog population. Securing homes for feral cats and abandoned

dogs contributes to the health, financial stability, and quality of life for people on the plateau. A grant to MARC will purchase live traps and pet crates, which will help secure homes for animals on the mountain.

Monteagle Elementary School: \$3,123 of a \$4,678 project to implement an archery education program encouraging physical education for a wide student population and capitalizing on the strengths of our mountain community's access to land for hunting and fishing.

Mountain Goat Trail Alliance: \$3,009 of a \$6,128 project to install cameras along the Mountain Goat Trail in Tracy City and Monteagle to prevent vandalism. Attracting thousands of visitors to the area and providing five million dollars in economic benefit, protecting the Mountain Goat Trail serves people in the surrounding communities.

Mountain T.O.P.: \$5,000 of an \$81,000 project collaborating with the Grundy County High School residential and commercial construction program to build a one-bedroom house for a housing insecure person in Grundy County. The home will be sold to the home buyer at a low interest rate, and the proceeds will pay for the materials cost for the next home.

Town of Tracy City: \$5,000 of a \$6,350 project to purchase and install sun shades in Roundhouse Park. The shades will be placed over the play area and playground equipment in order to keep direct sunlight off the children.

Image: A volunteer for the Grundy County Food Bank sets out bread on the new tables funded by a recent SCCF grant. In Tennessee, over 20% of the population is food-insecure. We partner with three organizations on the Plateau that address these basic needs, including the Community Action Community, Morton Memorial Food ministry, and the Grundy County Food Bank.

2023

Collaborative Grants

Connect for Lasting Impact

Established as a board-directed grant in recognition of the 10th anniversary of the Community Fund, the collaborative grant round has now made grants for five collaborative projects, totalling \$110,000. In 2023, the Community Fund made three grants of \$20,000 each for the following projects:

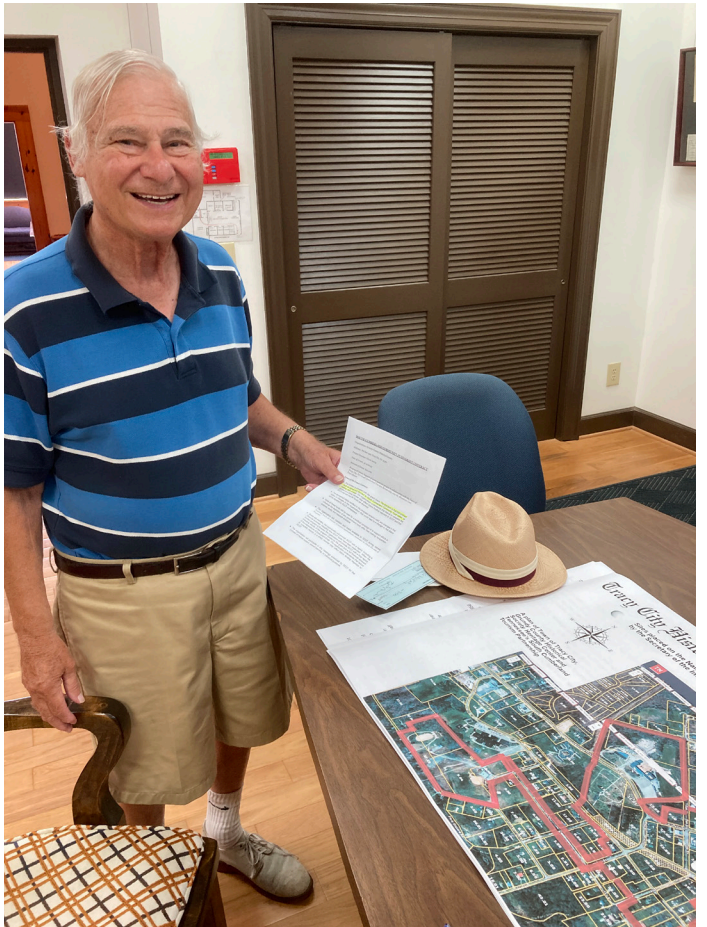
1. **St. Mark's Community Center, Mountain T.O.P., the University Farm, and Growing Roots.** These community partners wish to revitalize the St. Mark's community center and to expand the role of the Community Association on the southeast side of Sewanee. They envision serving the historic St. Mark's community and the broader group of people who have roots in that community as well as neighboring communities in Sewanee and Midway. The initial project is a community garden, which will be managed by people with connection to the historic community. Mountain T.O.P. seeks an inroad into the Sewanee community to provide home repairs and will assist with construction. Growing Roots and the University Farm will provide gardening design and expertise. All four partners will develop programming to serve the community, from information on weatherization and insulation to home canning and nutrition to gardening.

2. **Monteagle Elementary School and Morton Memorial Food Bank.** These two partners launched a conversation about collaboration at a grant orientation session in early June. The School has made attempts in the past to launch a backpack program for their students in homes that experience food insecurity. With limited funds and limited knowledge of food purchases and availability, they could only make limited positive changes in students' lives. Morton Memorial Food Ministry, on the other hand, has years of experience purchasing food at low cost, making connections with local food suppliers, and distributing food to people who need it. The collaboration will allow each organization to leverage its expertise. The school knows its students and

knows where intervention can make a difference in school success and the church knows about food acquisition and distribution. The \$20,000 proposed will provide food for two years, allowing Morton Memorial to develop financial partnerships that will sustain the program in the future. As one committee member put it, "this is a sensible extension of both partners' mission and can achieve measurable impact."

3. **Grundy County Heritage Society, the Town of Tracy City, TN's South Cumberland Tourism Partnership, and the Mountain Goat Trail Alliance.** These four partners have an ambitious plan for placemaking and inclusive public accommodation in downtown Tracy City that they hope will go far toward revitalizing that commercial district. The project will complement Old Roundhouse Park with public spaces for festivals and other such events. It will capitalize on the tourist draw of the Tracy City Historical District. By adding the potential for festivals and music in the central downtown space, this project will contribute to the sense of energy and community in Tracy City which has been begun by improvements such as the park, its community-created mural, and the additions to the Historical Center. The cultural and social opportunities for people on the Plateau will be expanded by this project. The project has three phases, each costing about \$20,000, and each being able to independently further the overall project. The committee elected to fund one of the phases (to be selected by the grantee).

Images: Clockwise from top left, Alyse Getty demonstrates a weekend food package to be distributed at Monteagle Elementary School. Oliver Jarvis with a map for the Tracy City historic district, a project supported by the Community Fund. Erica Howard, Olivia Howard, Evelyn Patton, and Kathy Solomon work in the new garden beds at the St. Mark's Community Center.



Teacher's Dream Comes to Life as GCHS Carpentry Students Build House

By Beth Riner for SCCF

Grundy County High School teacher Tim Tucker always dreamed his residential construction students would one day build a house. Now, an innovative collaboration between Mountain T.O.P., Communities in Schools, and South Cumberland Community Fund is making that happen.

What's even better is that the house, aptly named Blessing House, will provide affordable housing in Coalmont for a 37-year-old single mom and her teenage son.

"My whole life everything was impossible," said the Grundy County woman, "but thanks to our good Lord, the community, and these kiddos, the impossible has become possible—owning my own home has been a lifelong dream."

Creating affordable housing on the South Cumberland Plateau is a top priority for Julie Keel, program director of Mountain T.O.P.

"We are a fifty-year old partnership ministry—so we're faith-based," Keel explained. "We come from the Christian worldview which means that we think that housing and human flourishing is important."

Keel's been with the organization for the last 17 years.

"I've become committed to seeing more roofs of homes or apartments built in or around this area for folks who have a hard time accessing housing as it is now," Keel said.

A friend, Rich Wyckoff, past SCCF chair and a volunteer with Sleep in Heavenly Peace, which build beds for children, called her out of the blue last May to ask if she wanted to build a house with Tucker's residential construction classes.

It was an immediate yes for Keel.

"The idea was that the house would be purchased by somebody who could qualify for a low-interest, low-income loan," she said, noting that using donated land and volunteer student labor would keep the house affordable.

To start construction in August when the school year began, Mountain T.O.P. partnered with GCHS; Communities in Schools, led by Tracy City Councilwoman Sara Brown, a social worker at the school; the Community Fund; and the newly-formed Housing Hub.

"We just decided that we were going to get started," Keel said. "Tucker was ready, and we thought we could do at least one half of the house with the funding that we had. We really believed in Tucker and his students, and they have more than delivered."

The long-term goal is for students to build a house each year, according to Lee Limbird, SCCF board member.

"The fall semester they build one half, and the spring semester they build the second," Limbird said. "The halves can go on flatbed trucks to be delivered to the housing site. They'll be put together by the students and by adult volunteers in the spring and summer. Before that, the foundation will be laid, so the halves will lay right on top of the foundation. One half is already finished; shingles are on it. The new homeowner has been identified, and the house is going on some property her mother has given to her."

Tucker said the 768-square-foot house will contain two bedrooms and a bath, be finished in siding, and include a front porch. It takes about two months to build each side of the house. Tucker has his core group of student builders for two periods a day and has to factor in school closings or other events that may pull them from class.

"My students have done a wonderful job on it," said Tucker, a former building contractor before he began his teaching career. "I've had to do a lot of things to figure out how to move the house, but it's coming together. I'm gonna get a field day for my second semester kids, and we're going to pour the footer."





His students have learned to work safely at heights, shingle roofs, install plywood to hang doors, cut in stairs, and even install bathtubs.

“The basic thing in carpentry is to start out level and make all the walls plumb and get it square,” Tucker said. “If it starts out that way, everything goes good. I push tape measure, tape measure, tape measure.”

Tenth-grader Mason Miller of Altamont appreciates the hands-on, practical process of learning to build a house.

“It was more difficult than I realized,” he said, “but it wasn’t harder than we could do. I feel like I am getting the full experience of what it will be like when I am on the job.”

His classmates, Peyton McGee of Beersheba Springs, Justin Cox of Coalmont, and Jeremiah Sanders of Tracy City, have nothing but praise for their teacher.

“He’s very easy-going,” McGee said. “If you mess up, he’ll talk you through it. He won’t get mad.”

Sanders, who is already on his way to becoming a skilled wood carver, is thrilled to be in Tucker’s class to learn the house-building process. “When I got this class, it was a dream come true for me,” he said.

Limbird sees the building collaboration as a win-win for everyone. “The exciting thing, I think, is the school part where kids are learning these skills in high school,” she said. “Maybe some will become contractors; maybe some won’t, but they’ll certainly be able to be more effective as home owners or help their parents with taking care of homes.”

Keel has her fingers crossed that the project is repeatable.

“This is an experiment,” she said, “We’ve never done anything like this before. What I understand from Tucker is that the benefit to students far exceeds what we thought in the beginning—his students learn in the classroom and then walk out the door to where this structure they were just discussing is right there in front of them.

“They know that what they’re doing will help a family. Housing is one of those things that touches every aspect of a person’s well-being, so the impact is pretty great when you think about it.”

Images: Tim Tucker works with students on a drizzly day behind Grundy County High School to build a home. Workforce development through a partnership with Grundy County High School is a principal goal of Housing Hub.

Community Development Milestones

In 2023, the Community Development Committee met several major milestones: it launched working groups on housing and transportation that are seeking solutions for these longstanding challenges; it worked collaboratively to successfully apply for a grant from the Tennessee Department of Health; and it launched a “Communities of Practice Program,” in collaboration with seven community partners and Winrock International, serving as a consultant.

The program was launched in conjunction with the Philanthropy Internship Program celebration, at which the keynote speaker was Linsley Kinkade, former senior U.S. programs director for Winrock International. Winrock is a global nonprofit organization headquartered in Little Rock, Arkansas, whose mission is to “empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity and sustain natural resources.” (<https://winrock.org/about/>) The philanthropy interns had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Kinkade to discuss her philanthropic journey and share their own. Said Emma Grace Hendrickson, “Ms. Kinkade’s emphasis on the importance of supporting the people behind a mission and seeing their vision for the project greatly spoke to me, because what I was looking for when talking with the grant applicants was passion first and foremost.”

In the days surrounding the celebration, Kinkade and her colleagues met with nonprofit leaders on the Plateau to establish a community of practice—a group that works together to provide mutual support and strengthening.

Organizations from across the service area, representing South Cumberland Community Fund’s strategic priorities, met together to define best practices.

“We were really happy with the launch of our Communities of Practice program, said Katie Goforth, director of community development who collaborated with Sewanee professor Katy Morgan on the program. “We were able to have four sessions with seven nonprofit leaders who have been grant partners, and we were able to bring in expertise through Winrock as well as the University.”

In 2024, each member of the original Community of Practice will be supported in developing an educational program for other organizations on the Plateau, so each partner will then begin forming its own community of practice.

“This program really goes hand in hand with our growing emphasis on collaboration as a tool for success,” noted Executive Director Sanders. “We are so grateful to Katie Goforth, Katy Morgan, and all the partners involved for launching this program, which is destined to provide great leadership for the Plateau.”

Image: In the Fall of 2023, the Communities of Practice Program was organized in a series of meetings at the South Cumberland Community Fund’s office in Monteagle. From left, Katie Goforth, Mandy Eller, Spike Hosch, Emily Partin, Linsley Kinkade, Wall Wofford, and Ned Murray.





The Honorary Board Connects Past to Present

In November, Rich Wyckoff, past chair of the board attended his last meeting as a member of the board. It was the culmination of a six-year run of devoted service to the Community Fund, on which he made a permanent mark.

“As chair, Rich was remarkably supportive and in touch,” notes Tom Sanders, executive director. “He had an amazing grasp of what was happening in the organization, and was a true leader.” Sanders praised Wyckoff for helping inspire fellow board members to learn about the community, reflect on its values and its needs, contribute to its well being, and employ [their own](#) skills and talents to the organization and to the community.

In addition to serving as chair, Wyckoff also served on the development committee, and he will remain a member of the committee after leaving his term-limited position on the board. “Rich has amazing connections across the Plateau,” Sanders observed. “He has been involved in a number of organizations here since his retirement to the Mountain, and he has had a tremendous impact on them all.”

Wyckoff will become a member of the honorary board, along with Mary Babson, who also finished two three year terms in 2023, and Nicky Campbell, who served the Fund ably as director of community development. In addition to serving on the finance committee and the community development committee, Babson also led a strategic planning initiative in 2019, and its revision in 2022.

“We are really fortunate that these three people—Rich, Mary, and Nicky—will still be closely involved with the fund as Honorary Board members,” said Sanders.

The honorary board is chaired by Sheri Lawrence, past chair of the board. Members regularly provide advice and consultation to current staff and leadership that connects current operations to institutional memory.

Image: Rich Wyckoff and Mary Babson were honored at the annual board party in December, as they moved from the board to the honorary board. Nicky Campbell was also inducted onto the honorary board.



New Board Members

With the departure of Rick Wright, Mary Babson, Rich Wyckoff, and Nicky Campbell from the board, the Community Fund welcomes four new board members. We are excited about the contributions they will make to fostering hope and prosperity on the Plateau. Full bios of the new board members are available on our website.

John Hille is retired executive vice president of Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, and moved to Monteagle, Tennessee. Since then, he has served as interim vice president for Enrollment Management at Albion College and similarly for Wittenberg University. He also became a Certified Lay Minister and served as pastor for three Methodist churches in the Dowelltown area. He has been deeply connected to several community organizations, including Monteagle-Sewanee Rotary Club, the Friends of the South Cumberland State Parks, and Housing Sewanee. He is active in Morton Memorial United Methodist Church and was a member of the steering committee of the Sewanee Seminars Academy for Lifelong Learning. He is chair of the trails committee of the Clifftops Property Owners Association. Hille joins South Cumberland Community Fund’s development committee and will help launch a planned giving program.

Bonnie Miller, MD, MMHC is Professor of Medical Education and Administration Emeritus at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (VUSM). She is widely recognized as a leader in medical curriculum reform. During her tenure, Dr. Miller guided VUSM through several cycles of curriculum reform. Specifically, she led VUSM’s transition to Curriculum 2.0, an innovative program that moved core clerkships to the second year, allowed individualized pathways through the 2-year post-clerkship phase, and employed



a competency-based approach to assessment. Dr. Miller has consulted with many schools that seek to transform medical education in the US and abroad.

Since retiring from VUSM, Dr. Miller has served as a physician advisor for the Tennessee Department of Health Office of Primary Prevention, helping on special projects related to health equity, population health, and health professions education. She joins the South Cumberland Community Fund’s Community Development Committee and will help launch a new community health working group.

Geoff Post is chair of the board of Tower Community Bank, headquartered in Jasper, Tennessee. Through Post’s leadership Tower Bank has become a committed and generous community partner, investing in the communities in which it has depositors. Post and his wife Lecia (former treasurer of the Community Fund) have raised a family on the Plateau and have been part of community life for decades. Post will advise on investments and will also serve on the grants committee.

Sydney Shipps joins the Community Fund board after serving ably on the development committee. She helped organize the inaugural Benefit Concert in 2023 and was instrumental in a successful Fall Fundraiser in 2023. Sydney has a passion for making an impact, especially as it relates to children, their nutrition, and their education. She will remain involved in the Fund’s development committee and will join the grants committee.

Image: (Top left) John Hille, Sydney Shipps, and Geoff Post accepted positions on the board for the Class of 2024. Bonnie Miller, pictured left is the fourth new member. These new board members are helping with development, the grants committee, and the community health working group.

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Community Fund New Hire!

Ally Hollis joined South Cumberland Community Fund as assistant director in August of 2023, after seven years at the University of the South. Hollis graduated in 2016 with a degree in English and a minor in theatre arts, and she immediately got to work at the University's Office of Financial Aid. In February of 2018, she transitioned to working in the Office of Advancement, spending [five](#) years as assistant director of the Sewanee Fund, before moving to managing external communications for the Division of University Relations as their content and communications strategist.

Ally came to the Fund through her desire to become more enmeshed in the surrounding community and her dedication to using the skills and talents that were fostered on the Mountain to help support the work of the Community Fund. "Every day, I feel like I learn something new about the amazing things people are doing here. I'm so excited to have the chance to contribute to this place that I love, and I feel incredibly lucky to be part of an organization that has done, and will continue to do such great work."

Image: Reinactment of Tom Sanders welcoming Ally Hollis as South Cumberland Community Fund's new assistant director.