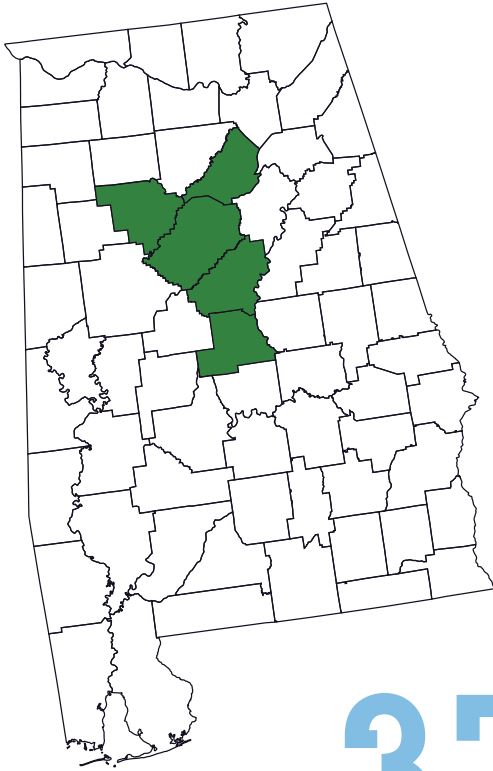


ALABAMA  
ASSOCIATION OF  
**RC&D**  
COUNCILS

2025  
ANNUAL REPORT





# CAWACO RC&D COUNCIL

## SERVING

**Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby and Walker  
Counties**

2112 11th Avenue South, Suite 541  
Birmingham, AL 35205  
205.623.0147

# 37

**Education  
Grants**

# 34

**General  
Grants**

# 4

**Area Wide  
Grants**

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## COUNCIL BOARD

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Chairman  
Shelby County

**Kevin Morris**  
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**Jenny Brown-Short**  
Walker County

**Keith Pike**  
Walker County

**Teresa Coin**  
Blount County

**Sylvia Singleton**  
Treasurer  
Chilton County

**Brandy Cleckly**  
Chilton County

**Stephen Watts**  
Jefferson County

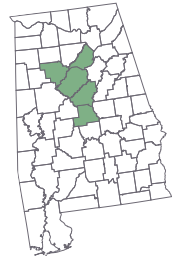
**Paul Kennedy**  
Walker County

**Jack Williams**  
Co-Chair  
Jefferson County

**Chase Moore**  
Blount County

**Jesslan Wilson**  
Shelby County





## GENERAL FUND GRANTS

### AREA WIDE

#### Addressing Unmet Needs

Cawaco RC&D provided assistance to Your Town Alabama, the City of Birmingham's e-Bike Program, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Southeast Aquatics Proposal, the Jefferson County Department of Health, and the City of Jasper. The assistance included grant management support, training and meeting planning and facilitation, and improvements to a public facility.

#### Grows Gardens

Cawaco RC&D Council provided gardening supplies to public, community and school gardens and sponsored gardening and drip irrigation workshops in Central Alabama, impacting roughly 500 people. The "Grows Gardens" project empowered residents to cultivate a greater abundance of food while providing a sustainable method to nourish plants—an essential resource for those residing in food deserts.

## BLOUNT COUNTY

#### Accessible Entrance to Community Arts Facility

The Community Arts Council of Blount County built an accessible entrance to their facility so all residents, regardless of ability, can patronize and participate in events and performances held at Blount County's only dedicated community arts facility, impacting roughly 200 people and engaging with 50 volunteers.

Expanded access to the facility allows exhibitors and participants to safely load and unload materials and supplies necessary for performances and events, supporting the ongoing efforts of the Council.



#### ADA Compliant Playground Equipment

The Town of Highland Lake purchased playground equipment for young children, serving residents, families residing in neighboring communities, and visitors enjoying the various recreational activities the town has to offer.



#### Ballistic Vests for Law Enforcement

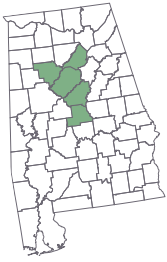
The Town of Cleveland purchased tactical body armor for local law enforcement officers who either did not have ballistic protection or were using equipment past its acceptable life expectancy. The equipment outfitted four officers with critical, life-saving equipment as they protect and serve the community.



#### CR 30 River Park

Friends of the Locust Fork River created a public access point at Bruce Phillips River Park on County Road 30. The park includes easy access for vehicles, a flat parking area, picnic area, stone staircase to the river, and will include a canoe/kayak slide for the convenience of paddlers. This project prevents further erosion of the riverbank and enhances Blount County's growing ecotourism economy with an additional access put-in on the renowned Alabama Scenic River Trail.





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## CHILTON COUNTY

### Butterfly Healing Garden - Hope Grows Here (Phase 2)

The Butterfly Bridge Children's Advocacy Center created the "Butterfly Healing Garden," a peaceful, welcoming space for children and families impacted by abuse to reflect, heal, and find comfort. The space benefits 125 people as it enhances the therapeutic environment and supports emotional well-being during difficult times.



### Clanton Police Department License Plate Reader

The City of Clanton purchased a license plate reader (LPR) to enhance crime-solving capabilities and increase public safety for its 9,000 citizens. The LPR has supported the Clanton Police Department in quickly solving crimes, recovering stolen vehicles, and preventing further criminal activity.

### Defibrillators for the Chilton County Sheriff's Department

The Chilton County Commission equipped law enforcement vehicles with defibrillators so sheriff deputies can provide faster and more efficient medical care in emergencies for the roughly 46,000 Chilton County residents. This safety equipment improves emergency response, increases survival rates, enhances community safety, and improves sheriff-community relations.



### Fire Hose Replacement

The Collins Chapel Community Volunteer Fire Department replaced outdated fire hoses with new ones that will serve the VFD for decades. The equipment aligns the VFD with neighboring agencies so they can function flawlessly while serving the roughly 46,000 citizens of Chilton County.

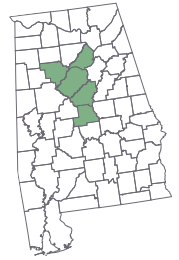
### Jemison Police Department Traffic Enforcement

The City of Jemison Police Department updated its speed detection devices for its patrol units to assist with speed enforcement. The roughly 2,900 people who call Jemison home will benefit from the department's ability to slow speeders down to prevent accidents caused by speed and to save lives.

### Saving our Own

The Cedar Grove Fire Department added equipment to assist in "Saving our Own." They purchased 1) a rapid intervention team kit to provide injured firefighters with emergency breathing air if they become incapacitated while fighting fires, and 2) a thermal imaging camera that detects heat to identify fire and people trapped inside a structure. The equipment will keep the brave volunteers safe so they can protect citizens and make it home at the end of every call.





## JEFFERSON COUNTY

### Cherokee Drive Sidewalk Project

The City of Trussville built a safe sidewalk that connects the Historic Cahaba Project's existing sidewalk system to both the Cahaba River Walking Trail and the recently completed Interpretive Educational Walking Trail. The "Cherokee Drive Sidewalk Project" improves walkability and public safety for all residents, particularly benefiting Cahaba Elementary School students and families by providing a safe pedestrian route away from busy traffic.

### Courtyard & Outdoor Classroom Revitalization

Trace Crossings Elementary School transformed an underutilized courtyard into a vibrant outdoor classroom for students to engage in activities like gardening and ecosystem studies. The project supported concrete remediation and replaced overgrowth with native plants.

### Graysville Fire Department 2024 Extrication Upgrades

The Graysville Fire Department upgraded to advanced stabilization equipment and vehicle-lifting airbags engineered to accommodate a broader range of vehicle sizes and weights to lift more rapidly and safely. These upgrades replaced equipment prone to failure or malfunction with reliable tools that can help the FD better serve the city's 1,800 citizens.



### Powered Stair Chair for Patient Egress

After seeing an increase in calls for occupant assists, Pleasant Grove Fire & Rescue acquired a powered chair stair. This battery-operated chair provides a much safer and more pleasant experience for citizens and first responders alike, leading to better outcomes as the department serves roughly 10,000 citizens.

### Roots of Nourishment Community Garden

The Roots of Nourishment completed their community garden with raised beds and an irrigation system to support 150 residents in North Birmingham through increased access to organic produce for low-income families, senior citizens, and youth. Community members are learning to grow their food, participate in wellness activities, and gain hands-on education about sustainable agriculture.



### Shops on Main

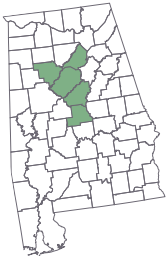
Leeds Main Street transformed a dilapidated building in the heart of its historic downtown into a dynamic business incubation hub. This project addressed critical infrastructure and accessibility needs through the construction of new restroom facilities, supporting revitalization efforts for the long-term prosperity and vibrancy of the community.

### The Lovelady Center Rooftop Garden

The Lovelady Center upgraded its rooftop garden with durable raised beds made from long-lasting materials. This garden serves

440 women and children in residence by providing fresh food, job training opportunities, educational programming, horticultural therapy, and outdoor recreation space. As part of their fundraising and business development efforts, Lovelady recently opened a marketplace where they sell produce from the garden, helping residents develop skills and resources to break cycles of incarceration, addiction, and poverty.





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## SHELBY COUNTY

### Calera Main Street Facade Improvement

Calera Mainstreet continued updates on their downtown revitalization project, the Calera Courtyard, with rear façade improvements, including architectural plans, commercial-grade gutters, and structural metal components needed for back-entry enhancements. These visible signs of progress are boosting confidence in the downtown district, encouraging further investment, and strengthening public support for continued revitalization.

### Forest Fire & Rescue UTV Skid

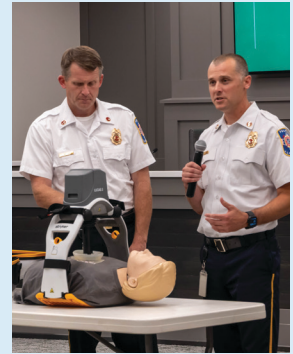
Dunnavant Fire District equipped its Utility Terrain Vehicle with a skid fire apparatus. Their service area is surrounded by mountains, so equipping this UTV allows them to access dense areas with rough terrain, opening an entirely new avenue of protection for the 4,000 people in its service area.

### Fund the Bus

Ady's BiG Army secured a bus to provide greater accessibility, independence, and inclusion for the adults with disabilities in their program. The bus will enable their 18 participants to take educational field trips and engage in life skills outings that help them develop greater independence.

### LUCAS Device

The City of Pelham and the Pelham Fire Department purchased a LUCAS (Lund University Cardio-pulmonary Assist System) device, an automated CPR system that will help save lives during cardiac emergencies. The device takes over the manual chest compression process, allowing paramedics to focus on other critical interventions during life-threatening situations and better serve the 25,000 citizens who call Pelham home.



### Mountain Biking Course

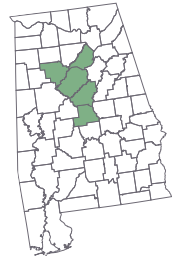
The University of Montevallo Foundation transformed an unused old storage unit into a functional space that supports the 19 students on their mountain bike team's growth and success. The refurbishment of this building created an environment where team members can collaborate, train, and thrive. Further, this project enhances the UM Biking course, making it an attractive venue for future biking events. It provides participants with a designated area to address their bike needs during competitions.



### Rope Rescue

The Helena Fire Department equipped one of its fire stations with sufficient rope rescue equipment so firefighters can respond more effectively to rescue situations involving individuals stranded or in danger in local waterways, including the Buck Creek Tributary and the Cahaba River. "Rope Rescue" benefits the hundreds of people who use the area rivers and parks for recreation, the thousands who drive through the roads and call the area home, and all the employees who work in the area quarries and industrial complexes.





## WALKER COUNTY

### Capstone Site Relocation Project

Capstone Health opened a replacement clinic at its rural Nauvoo location to offer expanded primary care services and includes an on-site pharmacy. The location serves 1,200 individuals each year.

### Purchase of Positive Pressure Ventilation Fans

The City of Cordova Volunteer Fire Department purchased two positive-pressure ventilation fans, which are essential in providing ventilation to clear heat and smoke in structures to allow search and rescue operations. The fans will benefit the roughly 5,000 people in the area and provide a safer working environment for the firefighters.

### Radio and Gear Grant

The Pineywoods Volunteer Fire Department equipped its first responders with radios and pagers to safely respond to and mitigate emergencies. This equipment improved communications between the department's responders and 911.

### Rescue Apparatus Repairs

McCollum-Midway Volunteer Fire Department repaired its rescue apparatus by replacing the engine, adding new tires, and updating worn equipment. The truck is now back in service, ready to respond to medical calls, accidents, fires, and mutual aid. This project restored the department's primary rescue vehicle, ensuring safer, faster responses for the community and neighboring areas.

### Small Amphitheater/Pavilion

The Carbon Hill Women's Club is building a pavilion to use for community and school events. The project will benefit 300 people, bringing the community together to the center of town.



### Tactical Backpacks

The Walker County Commission purchased Tactical Backpack Entry Tool Kits for every School Resource Officer in the county. These toolkits include a backpack, bolt cutters, an axle/sledge tool, and a Halligan bar tool, supporting the county's efforts in creating safer learning environments for their 7,200 students.

### Town Creek Park Revitalization - Phase 2

Friends of Downtown Jasper (DBA Jasper Main Street) transformed a weedy park in downtown Jasper into a vibrant, accessible, and ecologically sustainable community space. This project supported a landscape plan as well as outdoor lighting to allow for safe park usage in the evenings and encourage its use year-round.

### Ventilation Equipment

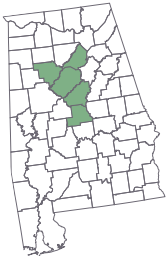
The Oakman Fire Department purchased new ventilation fans to aid in removing harmful gases, locating hotspots more quickly, and extinguishing structure fires. The new fans will keep the firefighters safe as they serve roughly 900 people in their area.

### Walker County Humane Society Spay and Neuter Program

The Walker County Humane Society aims to alleviate unwanted litters of kittens and puppies and reduce the number of homeless animals roaming the streets and entering overcrowded shelters by providing low/no-cost spay neuter services. They provided 725 spay and neuter services to the family pets of Walker County residents.

### Walker County Firefighters Association Training Center

The Walker County Commission funded a new 60'x60' training center for the Walker County Firefighters Association, providing space for meetings, classrooms, and training programs. This facility strengthens emergency preparedness by hosting monthly meetings, firefighter training, and seminars, while also supporting partner agencies like Alabama Forestry and EMA to better serve the citizens of Walker County.



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### Weekend Food Bags for Needy Children

Backyard Blessings is the only weekend feeding program for children in Walker County and is the sole provider of weekend food for children whose caretakers are unable or unwilling to find other means to feed them. By partnering with 18 local schools and a few additional schools in neighboring counties, they provided weekend food bags to approximately 1,400 children each week.

## EDUCATIONAL FUND GRANTS

### AREA WIDE

#### Cawaco Internships

Cawaco RC&D supports partners, schools, and other non-profits in hiring high school and college interns to assist with programming. The goal of the internship program is to nurture partnerships while encouraging youth to work and learn, knowing that what they contribute has value. The 2025 Cawaco internship program supported 9 organizations with 16 interns.



#### RC&D Training

Cawaco RC&D's staff and board attended several trainings to identify and deliver programs more efficiently. Trainings included education in QuickBooks, nonprofit accounting, GIS, the state RC&D conference, Your Town Alabama, and more. The project also supported the purchase of a camera to more effectively share grantee success stories, creating a peer-to-peer network between communities.

## BLOUNT COUNTY

#### Appalachian School Weight Room

Appalachian School equipped its new weight room with weight racks to provide student athletes opportunities to train and condition in a safe environment that promotes healthy living.

#### Blount County Jr Fire Academy Training Equipment

The Blount County Fire & EMS Association bought equipment to support the Jr. Fire Academy, a week-long physical, fun-filled educational and training program for high school students interested in a career in fire and emergency medical services. Among the equipment they purchased was a Challenger Forcible Door Prop to teach students how to open locked doors using hand tools in emergency and fire situations.



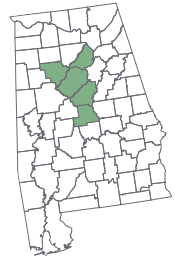
#### Expanding Community Outreach with the Goal of Preserving and Teaching History

The Blount County Historical Society and Memorial Museum is preserving memories of Blount Countians through a digital storytelling project. They purchased computer equipment so they could capture the goals and aspirations of local students as well as the memories of older generations on audio and video. The project expanded the museum and historical society's goal of enlightening and educating multigenerational groups by preserving the past and teaching the value of history.

#### Firefighter Safety and Health Training

Remlap Fire & EMS District outfitted their crew with wildland gear, a forestry hose, and nozzles. The gear is lighter and keeps the crew cooler while fighting forest fires. The new gear will help keep the 13 firefighters at the department safe so they can come home to their families at the end of every call.





### Mural Inside the Courtroom

The Blount County Commission engaged with a local artist and Oneonta City school students to paint a mural inside the county courthouse that represents the history and life throughout Blount County. The Blount County Museum helped the students and artists explore ideas of what makes Blount County special.



### Outdoor Classroom

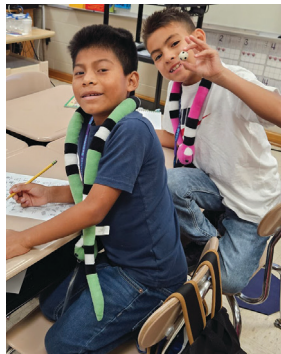
Fifth-grade students and teachers at Hayden Middle School took an active role in planning and implementing an outdoor classroom, working collaboratively to build raised garden beds, plant fall vegetables, and care for chickens. This project provided picnic tables for students to work on, raised garden beds with planting materials, and educational supplies. The project benefited 130 students.

### AED

The Summit Volunteer Fire & Rescue Squad equipped all its emergency vehicles with new automated external defibrillators (AEDs). This project replaced decade-old devices and provided AEDs to vehicles that previously lacked this life-saving equipment. The upgrade benefits approximately 5,000 residents in the squad's service area. Responders were also trained in proper use of the AEDs.

### Sizzling Summer Camps!!

Blount County Education Foundation hosted "Sizzling Summer Camps," serving 1,800 students with literacy, numeracy, and enrichment that turned summer slide into academic and personal growth.



## CHILTON COUNTY

### ACES Support

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System brought a fun new addition of STEM equipment for the Chilton County 4-H program. They provided hands-on coding, engineering, and design experience with Ozobots, 3-D pens, and a straw rocket launcher. The project served 250 students who got to learn with this equipment at in-school clubs and summer day camp programs.



### Care Net Parenting Programs and Parent University

Care Net of Chilton County empowered 50 parents and children with tools, skills, and incentives like infant care essentials, fostering positive family changes through parenting programs.

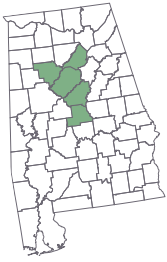
### Jemison Quarterback Club Community Mission Plan

The Jemison Quarterback Club revitalized and upgraded its facility with new turf, workout equipment, and an ice machine. The indoor facility provides a space for 1,000 children of all ages to improve their health and athletic skills.

### Joint Use Weapons Training Facility

The Chilton County First Response Endowment Fund established a training facility for law enforcement across the state to use for qualification and proficiency training in the use of firearms and other resources. The facility benefits extend beyond the 1,000 people it directly impacts—properly trained law enforcement officers create a safer environment for both residents and first response personnel.





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## JEFFERSON COUNTY

### 2025 Educational Programs

The Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District hosted two water quality programs. At the Rain Barrel Workshop, 43 citizens learned about stormwater runoff and proper rain barrel setup, and five barrels were donated to community gardens. Their Litter Quitters program empowered high school students to create video PSAs on the effects of litter, participate in cleanups, and see the real impact of their efforts.

### Breast Cancer Awareness Luncheon

The Penny Foundation hosted the Classic in Pink Affair Luncheon to celebrate breast cancer survivors and to bring awareness to breast cancer within the African American community. The luncheon educated 900 women about the importance of early detection, self-examinations, genetic testing, and local resources.



### Come to your senses! Let's fly the Coop!

Grantswood Community School created three outdoor classrooms to enhance STEAM education through hands-on, nature-based learning, benefiting 80 students. The project expanded three specialized learning spaces: a sensory garden to provide a calming environment for students to explore textures, sounds, and smells while fostering social interaction and imaginative play; an agricultural learning area featuring chicken coops and raised garden beds; and a pollination and beekeeping lab for students to study pollination and native species.



### Elevate Birmingham Program

Elevate Birmingham builds long-term, life-changing relationships with urban youth through a holistic mentoring and academic program that helps them thrive and contribute to their community. Elevate purchased a 12-passenger van to transport high school mentors to elementary schools and to provide students with access to community engagement opportunities, leadership experiences, and conferences that prepare them for post-graduation success. This transportation upgrade benefits 100 students.



### Employment Transportation Needs for Men Experiencing Homelessness

Changed Lives Christian Center purchased an eight-passenger van to support transportation for men experiencing homelessness. CLCC provides over 100,000 miles of employment transportation annually, helping participants secure and maintain jobs. So far, 55 men have been impacted by this project.

### Hoover Library Summer Free Lunch Program 2025

The Hoover Public Library provided 5,600 free lunches to children in Hoover and surrounding communities every weekday in June and July during the summer break. This program addresses the food security gap created when previous free lunch programs lost their funding.



BLOUNT, CHILTON, JEFFERSON, SHELBY AND WALKER COUNTIES

### Lamplight Summer Camp Outdoor Initiative Project Fund

Lamplight Summer Camp's "Outdoor Initiative Projects" encourages campers to develop projects that focus on improving the outdoor area around the camp. Campers develop pitch proposals, budgets, timelines, and spending plans. The campers completed six projects, including constructing a wooden bench, clearing a garden, building a scarecrow, creating a small football field, planting flowers and vegetables for the community, and clearing brush around the campfire and setting up seating and lighting.



### Midfield-HOLT Community Garden Pavilion

The Jefferson County Master Gardeners built a pavilion for the Midfield-Holt Community Garden. The pavilion benefits 200 people and serves as an area for shade, a classroom, and a vegetable cleaning station. The group plans to host educational programs for children and the general population and has worked closely with the Boys and Girls Club of Walker County.

### North Jefferson Business Training and Incubator Center

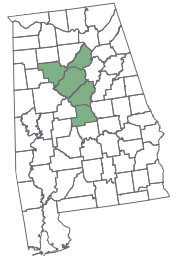
The City of Morris revitalized an existing building into a job training center and business incubator. The center has already benefitted roughly 300 people and will help new entrepreneurs and artists by providing training, networking, resources, and a space to grow.



### Replace Computer Equipment

The Literacy Council of Central Alabama equipped its staff with laptops, printers, and various accessories needed to conduct programming in the communities it serves. The equipment also supports the Literacy Council in opening a classroom that connects tutors and adult students in a group setting.

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### Tech Home Ec

Grace House Ministries provides stable homes for girls in foster care and includes a Campus School. "Tech Home Ec" equipped the school with equipment to use in their tech and home economics classes, including new computers and accessories, as well as a washer and dryer.



## SHELBY COUNTY

### Montevallo CO.STARTERS Program

Montevallo Main Street's CO.STARTERS Program walks entrepreneurs through business fundamentals in 10 weeks, all within a local context. The project covered the CO.STARTERS franchise fee and a facilitator stipend. Montevallo Main Street plans to welcome up to 15 participants in the fall 2025 program.

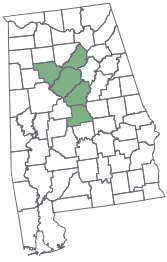


### Pelham Garden Club Native Plants & Pollinator Project

The Pelham Garden Club purchased a pull-behind tiller to remove invasive, non-native plants along the Pelham Greenway Trail, as well as wildflower seeds and plants to replant with native species. The "Native Plants and Pollinator Project" enhances the quality of life for over 24,000 residents of Pelham.

### Playground Surface Restoration

The Linda Nolen Learning Center installed new turf on its playground so it can be accessible for children of all abilities. The new surface provides a safe and welcoming space for the school's 100 children to play, learn, and connect. Families now have a local spot to gather, promoting a sense of community and encouraging healthy, active lifestyles. The playground has become a vibrant hub for social interaction, fostering friendships and joy for children.



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### Shelby County Agriscience FFA Garden Shed

Shelby County High School's FFA engaged with 11th and 12th-grade agriscience students to plan, draw, design, and build a garden shed. The project impacted nearly 160 students and engaged nearly 80 volunteers. The shed will be used to store the tools and supplies for the school's community garden, which provides fresh vegetables for the community.

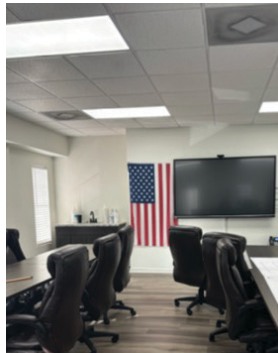
## WALKER COUNTY

### Autism Clinic Needs

Arc of Walker County equipped their clinic with autism testing materials, larger activity items needed for observation ability, and manipulatives that can be used for testing and sent home with families. As autism testing and diagnosis are often an unmet need in rural areas, this clinic is a critical need and cuts typical wait times from 18 months to within 8 weeks. The clinic has served over 50 children since the project began.

### Building Renovation

The Walker County Community Action Agency renovated the flooring, bathrooms, and kitchen in its new building. As the Agency grows, the new building will provide additional space so up to 100 youth can participate in their afterschool and summer program, a larger activity room to host larger group classes for financial planning and career development, and include space for a computer lab, library area, game area, and arts and crafts area.



### Cheer Safety

Carbon Hill Jr. High School replaced 15-year-old cheer mats to provide cheerleaders with the safest equipment possible. With the new mats, a safer environment, and the ability to safely tumble, the cheer team has increased its practice and competition time and now is able to host cheer clinics and competitions.



### Conservation Education

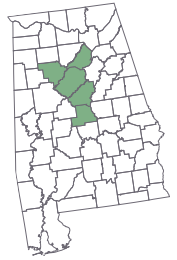
The Walker County Soil & Water Conservation District educated 1,360 students about the need for responsible environmental action through several programs, including the Water Festival. The District also installed seven waterway signs along I-22 marking the location of creeks to educate motorists about the location of water and to deter littering and pollution.



### Library Renovation

Lupton Jr. High School renovated the library with new shelving. The shelving is part of a broader renovation to include seating and workstations that support classes and their Blue Devil News Network, a group that shares announcements and character education each morning. The renovation helps transform the library into a 21st-century facility for the school's 440 students.





### Reclamation Gardens: Outdoor Classroom, Signage, and Community Space

Jubilee House built an outdoor classroom in their community garden to be used for training and workshops for people of all ages and to serve as a gathering place for community movie nights, meals, and other social events. The “Reclamation Gardens” project increased seating, shade, and lighting. Jubilee House also installed signage to communicate information about the project as well as their mission and vision. The project has benefited 150 people and impacted 25 students, as well as facilitated a greater level of communal engagement and events.



### Soaring Students to New Heights with the ACE Aviation Academy

The Jasper City School System sent 10 students to the Aviation Career Education (ACE) STEM Academy. Through hands-on experience like flight simulators, discovery flights, and immersive STEM-based learning, students gained valuable exposure to the fundamentals of flight, aircraft operations, aerospace technology, and aviation careers. The program sparked curiosity and helped students develop critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills – all while introducing them to the skies above.



### SFRS Training Program

Sumiton Fire and Rescue Service elevated its training capacity through the purchase of a forcible entry prop. The device will help firefighters train for the rapid and emergent entry into a structure during emergencies. This training will help Sumiton Fire and the surrounding departments keep over 5,000 people safe.







