

## Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership Annual Report 2024





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#### About the Resilient Georgia Regional Coalitions

<u>Resilient Georgia</u> has been working with sixteen regions across Georgia to provide an emphasis on trauma-informed awareness and care, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and child sexual abuse prevention training as a basis to transform systems and procedures crossing both public and private sectors.

- Resilient Georgia serves as a supportive and guiding resource during each region's planning and implementation process.
- These regional action plans each address the behavioral health needs of individuals birth through 26 years old and families in the community and surrounding counties using the Collective Impact framework (a diverse, robust, and well-planned public-private partnership).
- Trauma-Informed Care, ACEs and child sexual abuse prevention can be the basis for systemic changes in a community. Each region has identified how one or more of these content areas are delivered to diverse community members through formal training, education, marketing, and communications.
- In November of 2019, Resilient Georgia began partnering with Round 1 regional coalitions based out of Athens, Augusta, Macon, Savannah, and surrounding areas. Round two partnerships began in July 2020 with regional coalitions based out of Albany, Columbus, Rome, Thomasville, and surrounding areas. Round three partnerships began in March 2021 with regional coalitions based out of Clayton, Cobb, Gwinnett, Valdosta, and surrounding areas. Round four partnerships began in December 2021 with regional coalitions based out of Atlanta, Brunswick, Gainesville, and Waycross and the surrounding areas.
- In their third and fourth years of partnership with Resilient Georgia, coalitions have bolstered their work to create bold, systemic, sustainable change in consistent ways across statewide issues, to affect policy, systems and environmental (PSE) change and incorporated a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) lens in their action plans.

#### **Coalition Mission**

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership's mission is to build a trauma-informed community by strengthening its awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and their impact. This includes empowering victims of family violence through advocacy, community partnerships, and providing safe and hopeful environments that promote economic and family stability. Like many areas of rural Georgia, Waycross understands the importance of mental health and suicide prevention services and plans to develop training and programs to address both. In providing these trainings through our service providers and community partners, youth, parents, Law Enforcement, and First Responders, we will be able to promote resiliency in the Waycross Judicial Circuit through a unified trauma informed response. Additionally, Magnolia House is proud to announce that the Waycross Family Justice Center opened on



August 1, 2024. This center is a multi-agency, cross-sector service center that facilitates care for victims of interpersonal violence in one location. Visit our website to learn more at <a href="https://www.waycrossareashelter.com/">https://www.waycrossareashelter.com/</a> and follow us on Facebook at <a href="https://www.facebook.com/MagnoliaHouseShelter/">https://www.facebook.com/MagnoliaHouseShelter/</a>.

#### **Summary**

The Waycross Area Resilient Partnership has restructured our coalition and Resilient Georgia Team to achieve our common goals through connecting participating agencies that share the same mission, vision, and goals. Magnolia House is the lead agency in the Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership. Under the Magnolia House umbrella there are three centers: Magnolia House DV Shelter, Magnolia House Youth Center, and the Waycross Family Justice Center. Magnolia House has worked diligently to promote coalition work and collective impact framework. This restructuring has allowed us to expand our communications and collaboration with different organizations while gaining a larger scope of our community needs. We currently partner with our Family Connections, Law Enforcement Divisions, and Schools in each of our six counties. We have fourteen partners. Our target audience includes but not limited to our youth age birth to twenty-six, service providers and community partners, parents, Law Enforcement, First Responders, social workers, and counselors. Our coalition works to increase representation of the underrepresented groups, maintain a diverse leadership team, embed diversity, and inclusion into Human Resource policies. Our goal is to create sustained organizational change and promote justice, diversity, equality, and inclusion. Through our new Family Justice Center, we will see even more results in the work we do while taking the multiagency, multi-disciplinary approach in delivering hope, healing, and transformation in victims and their families. The Waycross Family Justice Center opened on August 1, 2024. The work that we all do together within our six-county coalition has brought more views and attention to the prevention efforts, awareness, and education that we have been able to provide through the help of Resilient Georgia. The Waycross Family Justice Center initiative has been one of our largest opportunities to spread the need to be more victim-centered, trauma-informed, and raise hope among our families and youth.

#### **Leadership Team and Contributors**

List the members of the coalition, leadership of the coalition, and other contributors. Please include primary organization and title.

#### Michelle Girtman

Executive Director, Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a Magnolia House



#### **Heather M. Flowers**

Family Justice Center Site Coordinator, Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a Magnolia House

#### **Lucille Husbands**

Fiscal/HR/Admin Manager, Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a Magnolia House

#### **Mary Fogle**

Community Awareness Coordinator, Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a Magnolia House

#### **Lisa Manders**

Special Projects Coordinator, Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a/ Magnolia House

#### **Coalition Partners**

List all the partners within your coalition, including:

- a) Public:
  - (1) Waycross Police Department
  - (2) Ware County Sheriff's Office
- b) Southeast Health District/CDC
- c) Private:
- d) Academic: Ware County Board of Education
- e) Non-Profit:
  - (1) Magnolia House
  - (2) YMCA of Waycross
- f) Community:
  - (1) Ware County Family Connections
  - (2) Brantley County Family Connections
  - (3) Charlton County Family Connections
  - (4) Coffee County Family Connections
  - (5) Pierce County Family Connections
  - (6) Unison Behavioral Health
  - (7) Southeast Georgia CASA
  - (8) Bacon County Family Connections
- g) Other:

We have connected or partnered with the following organizations and agencies:



- a) The Georgia Department of Family and Child Services
- b) The Georgia Department of Education
- c) The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
- d) The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- e) The Farm Bureau
- f) The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education
- g) Georgia Family Connection Partnerships
- h) Chambers of Commerce
- i) Community Service Boards

## **Message from Coalition Members**

Magnolia House is a pillar in the community. They reach out and help at every possible opportunity. When support is needed with a program or service that may not be able to serve on all levels, Magnolia House will often step in and fill in the gaps. As a Family Connection Director, I feel blessed to partner with them, we have similar goals and objectives in trying to create safe, healthy, and self-sufficient families, together we will always accomplish more than if we were separate, that's why we value all of the efforts Magnolia House puts into creating a better environment for all. –Stephanie Bell, Executive Director, Pierce County Family Connections

Magnolia House has been an invaluable partner to Ware County Schools, demonstrating an unwavering commitment that has profoundly impacted our community. Their support enables us to provide optimal services for both students and staff. Through our collaboration, our mental health staff has acquired essential knowledge in effective pharmacotherapy for children's disorders, strategies to mitigate secondary traumatic stress, and coping mechanisms for children facing anxiety and anger. This expertise is crucial as we strive to support our students every day. Additionally, our students had the unique opportunity to engage with former NFL star Tra Battle. His inspiring journey of overcoming challenges resonated deeply, illustrating the power of perseverance and inner strength. This experience would not have been possible without Magnolia House. In closing, I want to emphasize that our partnership with Magnolia House is more than just a collaboration; it is a lifeline for our students and staff. Together, we are not only addressing immediate challenges but also building a foundation for lifelong resilience and success. Thank you, Magnolia House, for being our steadfast ally on this journey. —Kim Callahan, Ed.D, NCC, LPC, CPCS, Student Services Coordinator, Ware County Board of Education

I always enjoy working with Waycross Resilient Georgia because I always sense that the work they do is genuine, and they truly care about the hearts and lives of those in their community. I will never say NO to working with Waycross Resilient Georgia because it's always good to be



around good people. Some people work out of the need to earn an income. Other people work out of the need to fulfill purpose. Waycross Resilient Georgia works out of the purpose, and the joy of that work breaks out of them like sunshine rolling into the morning sky. —Tra Battle, M. Psy., Battlesolutions, Keynote Speaker, Life & Professional Coach, Team & Culture Training, Former UGA/NFL Athlete





## Snapshot of Key Impacts from Years 1 and 2:



#### Key

## COALITION OVERVIEW 2020 -2023



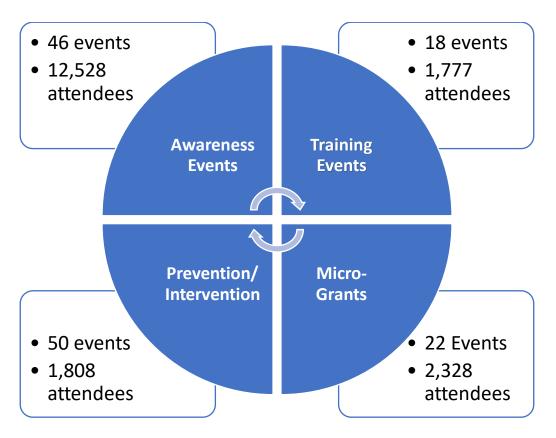
#### **Impacts/Accomplishments**

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership continues to work and collaborate with our coalition partners and participating agencies to continue building a trauma informed



community, and increase awareness across all sectors to center around adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and Trauma Informed Care (TIC). We have continued to work towards increasing our partnerships to reach more youth while bringing more awareness and hope to our community. During 2024, we have made big strides towards becoming more trauma informed as well as opening a center that will provide hope, healing, and transformation for victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Child Abuse, and Elderly Abuse. The Waycross Family Justice Center will provide holistic services while creating a safe space that will honor all survivor experiences and foster ongoing community, dignity, trust, and hope. This center aligns perfect with the work that we have implemented with our Resilient Georgia dollars. As we move into year four, we will continue to be more intentional and specific to the needs of our target areas, build a robust coalition, and expand even farther into our six communities.

Thank you, Resilient Georgia, for making all these opportunities possible in the Waycross Judicial Circuit.



**TIC/ACES Services – General** 



The Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership provides Trauma-Informed Care and Adverse Childhood Experience trainings, lunch and learns, support groups, advocacy, and events in our community. We work with the local Head Start which begins at birth to age four. The maximum age served in our community is twenty-six as far as consideration as youth however we also include the parents and caregivers of these individuals. Our coalition's scope is beyond the youth in the efforts as we include training and events for Law Enforcement, Advocates, agencies/staff working with youth ages birth to 26. We have worked with Family Connections, the Board of Education, and private schools to target this age group and focus efforts on youth mental health as well as partnering with the community for overall prevention efforts. We will continue to work towards increasing our partners to reach more youth to bring awareness and hope to our community. Through our efforts, our goal is for our communities to become more trauma-informed, hope centered, and survivor driven. Just a few snapshots of the efforts we have made in our community in 2024.

"Chalk About It" events that encouraged positivity while helping break the stigma of mental health and suicide prevention.





Ware County Board of Education's Counselors Training featuring "Understanding our Youth and Healthy Ways to Assist." Guest Speaker: Tra Battle, a former collegiate and NFL Player who spoke on Mental Health and Suicidal thoughts.







Law Enforcement Day with the "I Am" Girls at the Magnolia House Youth Center and Safety Day at the Magnolia House Youth Center with the Youth Empowerment Team. We strive to build healthy connections between our youth and First Responders.





The Waycross Police Department holds Citizen's Police Academy to educate the community on resources while learning about law enforcement, policies, and safety training. Adrian Peterson



Sports Camp was held in Ware County and Brantley County this year allowing us to expand this opportunity to more young people.



End of the year Bowling and Pizza Party with the Ware County High School Law Enforcement pathways program. Ware County Sheriff's Office came out and bowled with the kids while encouraging them to continue to work hard and to always have a great day on purpose.







## **Prevention/Intervention**

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership is currently offering micro grants to our Family Connections partners, other non-profit organizations, and aligned community organizations to strengthen our vision and efforts in the more rural areas of our region. The recipients of the micro grants will focus on implementing trauma-informed practices that will strengthen our communities, provide holistic training, and promote system changes. We had fourteen entities who utilized these Micro Grants to fund opportunities in their communities. Here are some examples of the activities and training that they offered to their community partners, youth, and families. Charlton County hosted Babes & Tots Story Time for afterschool age children, Brantley County continued to work towards implementing Handle With Care, Self-Care initiative through the schools, Resource Fair and End of School Bash, Ware County held a Know Your Worth Kick-Off for Suicide Prevention month along with Teen Maze, Bacon County's Day of the Child and School Attendance Program, Coffee County will be hosting a Youth Resource Fair and Fun Day, and teamed up with Ware County on a "Know Your Worth" Kickoff at the Coffee/Ware County Football Game, Pierce County planned and coordinated the Critical Incident Stress Management Training however it has been postponed until 2025, Ware County will be organizing and hosting the G.R.O.W.T.H. Information Exchanges (Guiding Relationships and Opportunities with Teenagers at Home, Citizens Police Academy, Safe Trick or Treating tips, and Youth Auxiliary Program. Magnolia House has continued to work with the "I Am," "Good Enough," "Youth Empowerment Team," and "Diva Dawgs" programs within the school system to encourage safety, self-care, and increasing awareness in our youth.

## Advocacy and Policy, Systems and Environmental (PSE) Changes

- Magnolia House Shelter, Waycross Family Justice Center, and Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership focuses on our victims, children, and families as we provide effective advocacy that will in turn help them to gain their voices, inspire hope within them, and encourage positive changes. Our advocates have been working with youth groups in our community to deliver life skills, education, and stress-free activities.
- Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Activities (Please be sure to give an example at each level)
  - O Policy: Our coalition will work with Brantley County Family Connections, Brantley County Law Enforcement, and the Brantley County Board of Education to implement the Handle with Care Initiative in their school systems. We will partner with Brantley Family Connections to review training opportunities and collaborative meetings that will bring more knowledge to the Brantley County community on being trauma-informed and exercising hope and healing to their youth. Our coalition will continue to work with the Waycross Judicial Circuit Domestic Violence Task Force to look at policies that will encourage the development of a Family Violence Intervention program within our six-county



radius. A certified Family Violence Intervention Program is a 24-week program that is designed to rehabilitate family violence offenders by holding them accountable and prioritizing victim safety. We met with an FVIP provider on Tuesday, April 23, 2024, at our DV Task Force meeting to discuss this process and how it would work in our communities. We have not been able to implement this process at the current time, however we will continue to follow up with options.

- **Systems:** We have currently included health services for clients at the Magnolia House and the Waycross Family Justice Center. The Department of Public Health provides these services. The services that are provided are as follows: Immunizations, developmental screening, WIC, vaccinations, hearing, and dental screening, STI, family planning, prenatal care, and perinatal health partnership (women and infants at risk for poor outcomes). After meeting with the Southeast Health District to discuss their participation in the Waycross Family Justice Center and inviting them to tour the Rose Andom Center in Denver, Colorado, they agreed to hold office space and provide a Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse, along with other team members that will be able to provide the health services and advocacy that our victims and families need. This will provide better healthcare services for the families we serve as well as bringing training opportunities. Through the development of the Waycross Family Justice Center, we have built strong relationships with Department of Family and Children Services, Department of Public Health, Division of Child Support Services, Georgia Legal Services, Magnolia House Shelter/Outreach Program, Unison Behavioral Health, Ware County Sheriff's Department, and Waycross Police Department. All these agencies are now located in the Family Justice Center together providing a coordinated response and entry for our victims to gain hope, healing, and justice. This opportunity has also encouraged a victimcentered approach to the families we serve.
- is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary, co-located center that provides wraparound services to victims of interpersonal violence. This center was designed to unite victim services under one roof. The participating agencies will work towards a coordinated response by streamlining the intake process that allows victims to tell their story once and receive the services they need to heal. We see our community working together and we believe survivors and a Family Justice Center will be grounded in inclusion and choice that empowers all human beings to find pathways to hope, healing, and transformation. We have created a QR code that is linked to the Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a/Magnolia House. Under this umbrella, victims, youth, and our community will be able to access the resources of the Magnolia House Shelter and Magnolia House Youth Center. We are working towards implementing the Waycross Family Justice Center in a QR code now that we have opened the center. We will



work towards placing a dynamic/trackable QR code in the emergency vehicles of first responders so clients can scan the code and have access to the services that are provided through Magnolia House.

### **Training**

Do you provide any training opportunities? What have you accomplished in this area? How? Any concrete results (e.g., population reached, number of workshops, etc.), partnerships/collaborations involved and planned next steps if any?

Education and Training Opportunities—Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership kicked off 2024 with a Counselor Training titled "Understanding our Youth and Healthy Ways to Assist". This training was delivered to bring awareness and understanding to Youth Mental Health. We also brought in Tra Battle, a former collegiate and NFL Player who spoke on Mental Health and Suicidal thoughts. He covered three counties, Charlton, Coffee, and Ware during his 3-day tour. We have also brought Advocate Training to our community as well as The Haven in Lowndes County. We have worked with the Diva Dawgs, "I Am" Girls, Good Enough Group, Garden Gate Support Groups, Courageous Voices Support Group, Youth Empowerment Team, and DV Shelter Client Support Groups. We were able to work with Unison Behavioral Health to educate adults on Youth Mental Health and Adult Mental Health in April and May. Our Law Enforcement Training and First Responder Training were held in August and October. Our Family Justice Center team attended Chattanooga, Tennessee in September to obtain one on one training with the Hamilton County Family Justice Center. This allowed us an opportunity to learn more about how the process of the center works. It also gave us an insight into how we would be able to make sure the streamline process will eliminate re-traumatization to our victims and children. This was a wonderful experience for the staff and law enforcement to have some oneon-one training with the experts.

#### **Research and Evaluation**

Research Endeavors: During the beginning of 2024, we researched the dynamic set ups to a Family Justice Center as well as work alongside Ken Shetter, Director, Alliance for HOPE International, our technical assistance provider and national accreditation of Family Justice Centers. Throughout the year we have worked with four other nationally accredited Family Justice Centers to discuss data, trends, and changes. Our coalition should work to increase representation of the underrepresented groups, maintain a diverse leadership team, embed diversity, and inclusion into Human Resource policies. It is important that each coalition partner be held accountable for ensuring their entities are meeting their JEDI goals and aligning our JEDI efforts with the wider organizational goals, vision, and mission. The Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership's goal is to create sustained organizational change and promote justice,



diversity, equality, and inclusion. Magnolia House, the lead fiscal agency, believes that it takes a diverse group of partnering agencies to work together in solving complex issues among our community. We were able to gain more knowledge through a survey with our Advocates after the training "Supporting Others and Ourselves" which was presented by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, CJCC. This training allowed them to learn more about the dynamics of being victim-centered, understanding the types of traumas and how they affect our mind and body. We feel that the more information we know about being trauma-informed will help us educate our communities and collaborate with different organizations that will push for policy and system change.

## **Innovative Partnerships**

Our partnerships continue to grow through collaboration with our participating agencies who are currently Resilient Georgia MOU partners, and micro-grant holders. The work that we all do together within our six-county coalition has brought more views and attention to the prevention efforts, awareness, and education that we have been able to provide through the help of Resilient Georgia. The Waycross Family Justice Center initiative has been one of our largest opportunities to spread awareness and efforts to be more victim-centered and trauma-informed while raising hope among our families and youth.



### **Spotlight: The Waycross Family Justice Center**



On August 1, 2024, Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a Magnolia House were proud to host the grand opening of the Waycross Family Justice Center. That day marked a milestone that will forever change the way we respond and handle victim services in the Waycross Judicial Circuit. The Family Justice Center is a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary, colocated center that provides services to victims of interpersonal violence under one roof. The Waycross Family Justice Center provides services to all six counties of the Waycross Judicial Circuit. This model has been built upon our community's strong partnerships that will create new opportunities for collaboration and innovation. Our victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Child Abuse will be connected quickly and confidentially to a full range of services provided by our participating agencies at one location. The center's streamline intake process reduces the number of places victims must go and the number of times they must tell their story to receive services. The Waycross Family Justice Center is built upon existing partnerships among the following agencies and organizations in Waycross Judicial Circuit. These agencies have committed to the established mission, visions, goals, and objectives of the center and have been supported by Service Agreements and Licenses Agreements. Here is a list of the onsite participating agencies in the center:

- Magnolia House
- Georgia Legal Services



- Ware County Sheriff's Office
- Waycross Police Department
- Ware County Department and Family Children Services
- Waycross Division of Child Support Services
- Unison Behavioral Health
- Department of Public Health, Southeast Health District
- Greater Valdosta United Way
- Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership Program Manager

Since our team and participating agencies have moved into the center, we have been busy assisting new clients as well as holding scheduled meetings, training, and tours. Here are some statistics that we would like to share:

From July 1, 2024, to October 31, 2024, we have provided a total of 354 services to our victims and families.

We have served a total of thirty-eight new clients.

We have provided Crisis Coordination and Safety Planning for thirty-eight clients.

We have had 24 Interagency Advocacy opportunities where we help set up appointments, model behavior, and offer them life skills and support.

We have made forty-four referrals to our other victim service providers who are either on-site and off-site and seven referrals to non-victim service providers.

Our transporter has provided transportation to our victims on ten separate occasions.

Our detectives who work on-site at the center has worked with 102 victims and children of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Child Abuse, and Elderly Abuse since July 1, 2024.

To summarize this information, we have seen an 88% increase in client services and a 90% increase in Victims seeking help at the Waycross Family Justice Center. Clients' intake has increased from 1 to 3 per week since July 2024. We have provided Crisis Coordination to every victim who has entered our center and more than 75% has received Safety Planning. Referrals have increased from 1 to 4 per week. Having law enforcement in the center has increased the number of victims who have received follow-up calls, interviews, and referral services to the participating agencies. Our participating agencies have worked diligently to provide wrap around services to victims in the Waycross Judicial Circuit. Not only have we been providing services to our victims, but we have also been able to host five meetings and three training sessions with our participating agencies and staff in our new training room since July 2024 with a total of 318 attendees. We have had an opportunity to educate them on the process of the Family Justice Center, how we can better collaborate with each of them, and how we can educate not only each other but our community in the work that we do. We are a community



that WORKS TOGETHER and BELIEVES SURVIVORS and a Family Justice Center grounded in INCLUSION AND CHOICE will EMPOWER ALL HUMAN BEINGS to find pathways to HOPE, HEALING, and TRANSFORMATION. Thank you, Resilient Georgia, for the encouragement and support through this endeavor.

Ribbon Cutting of the Waycross Family Justice Center.



Our Bank Representative handing Michelle Girtman, Executive Director, a Paid in Full Bank note.

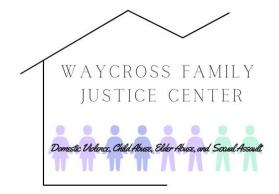




#### **Inspired Action**

We encourage each of you to continue following us through this journey and see how great opportunities can come to those in rural areas when you have a vision to elevate victim services, growth and development opportunities for the youth, and collaboration with the community. Please visit our website to learn more about our work, fundraisers, and events at <a href="https://www.waycrossareashelter.com/">https://www.waycrossareashelter.com/</a> and follow us on Facebook <a href="https://www.facebook.com/MagnoliaHouseShelter/">https://www.facebook.com/MagnoliaHouseShelter/</a>.







## **Income and Expenses/Financials**



# WAYCROSS AREA RESILIENT GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP



Revenue: Resilient Georgia Grant 2024 \$200,000.00

Expenses: Prevention/Intervention \$15,274.17

 Training
 \$ 32,000.00

 Awareness
 \$ 39,665.26

 Administrative Fees
 \$10,000.00

 Project Management
 \$28,318.13

 Micro-Grants
 \$38,657.39

 Meetings and Networking
 \$12,508.82

**Total Expenses:** \$ 176,423.77

Net Assets, As of 10/31/2024 \$23,576.23

\*\*\*Remaining Funds have been allocated to remainder of events scheduled in November and December 2024\*\*\*