

# Resilient & United

COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH GEORGIA



# 2023- 2024

March 2024

Serving Atkinson, Berrien, Brooks, Clinch, Cook, Echols, Lanier,  
and Lowndes Counties.



## REGIONAL GRANTEE ANNUAL REPORT YEAR 3

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# About the Resilient Georgia Regional Coalitions

**Resilient Georgia** has been working with 16 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 2 partnerships began in July 2020 with regional coalitions based out of Albany, Columbus, Rome, Thomasville and surrounding areas. Round 3 partnerships began in March 2021 with regional coalitions based out of Clayton, Cobb, Gwinnett, Valdosta and surrounding areas. Round 4 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

"Our mission is to bring together strong community partners to collaborate toward the destigmatization of mental health, prevention of ACEs, and to create a trauma-informed region. We aim to raise awareness, provide crucial mental health training throughout the region, improve access to care, advocate for effective programs and services, and find ways to streamline best practices."

– Susan Nebel, Greater Valdosta United Way  
Community Impact Director

## Bringing Positive Change to South Georgia

Resilient and United Communities of South Georgia (RUCSG) joined forces as part of a regional coalition to bring about positive change and offer resources to prevent and lessen Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are stressful and potentially traumatic events, such as violence, neglect, and household dysfunction.

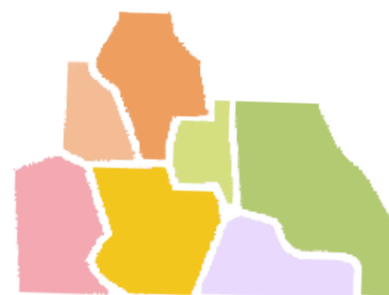
Established in 2021, the RUCSG's work is focused on eight South Georgia counties. It includes the Greater Valdosta United Way (GVUW), Legacy Behavioral Health Services (LBHS), United2Prevent, U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Valdosta State University's Health Promotions and Wellness Department, as well as various other community partners.

Within RUCSG's geographical footprint, there has been an increase in concern about adverse mental health, suicide, human trafficking, and ACEs. The coalition continues to collaborate to provide evidence-based training for non-profit staff, childcare providers, educators, law enforcement, first responders, and other community stakeholders to address these issues.

# Summary

## About RUCSG

Through the development of a shared vocabulary and comprehension of hardship over the past two years, Resilient and United Communities of South Georgia has raised the level of awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, and resiliency in our community. In order to strengthen and broaden these initiatives in years three and four, the coalition wants to increase the breadth and depth of Resilient and United Communities of South Georgia within our Resilient Georgia coalition's eight-county region across the following counties: Atkinson, Berrien, Brooks, Clinch, Cook, Echols, Lanier, and Lowndes Counties.



### OUR MISSION

Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia's mission is to create positive change by bringing resources together to improve people's lives in local communities through:

1. Continuing to develop mental health awareness through training and education
2. Focusing on suicide prevention in youth up to age 26
3. Evaluating training outcomes to assess the impact on trauma-informed awareness and education
4. Promoting resiliency in South Georgia through a unified trauma-informed response

### OUR PURPOSE

Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia serves populations that experience poverty, have limited access to transportation resources, and may have a lack of knowledge about available services. These rural South Georgian communities have seen increased concerns of adverse mental health, suicide, human trafficking, and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

### OUR GOALS

1. Continue building a Trauma-Informed Community
2. Improve Resiliency using the Community Resiliency Model
3. Continue to create awareness and aid the prevention of childhood Trauma: ACE's prevention
4. Promote Positive Childhood Experiences

**Resilient & United**  
COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH GEORGIA



# Lead Contributors



**Michael Smith**

President & CEO  
Greater Valdosta United Way



**Susan Nebel**

Community Impact Director  
Greater Valdosta United Way



**Paivi Parssinen**

Chief Operating Officer  
Legacy Behavioral Health Services



**Tra Battle**

President/CEO  
Battle Solutions



**Mary Crawford**

Executive Director  
Girls on the Run, South Georgia



**Casey Horne**

Licensed Clinical Pastoral  
Counselor  
Soul Care of South Georgia



**Adrian Peterson**

Director of Student-Athlete  
Development  
Georgia Southern University



**Karen Yawn**

Dual Program Coordinator  
The Haven, Battered Women's  
Shelter



**Mallory Sims**

Chief Clinical Officer  
Legacy Behavioral Health  
Services



**Heather Stephens**

Community Based Interventions  
U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs

*"The partnership between LCMHC, GVUW, and RUCSG has laid the foundation for partners to expand coalition efforts to the counties outside of Lowndes with the hopes of mirroring the LCMHC in the other counties. Without the connections and support of the GVUW and its partner organizations, the LCMHC would not be what it is today."*

*-Heather Stephens, U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs*

# Coalition Partners

## Public Partners

### City of Valdosta

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### Georgia Power

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## Private Partners

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## Academic Partners

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# Coalition Partners

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## Community Partners

### DECAL

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### Legacy Behavioral Health Services

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Mayor of Valdosta  
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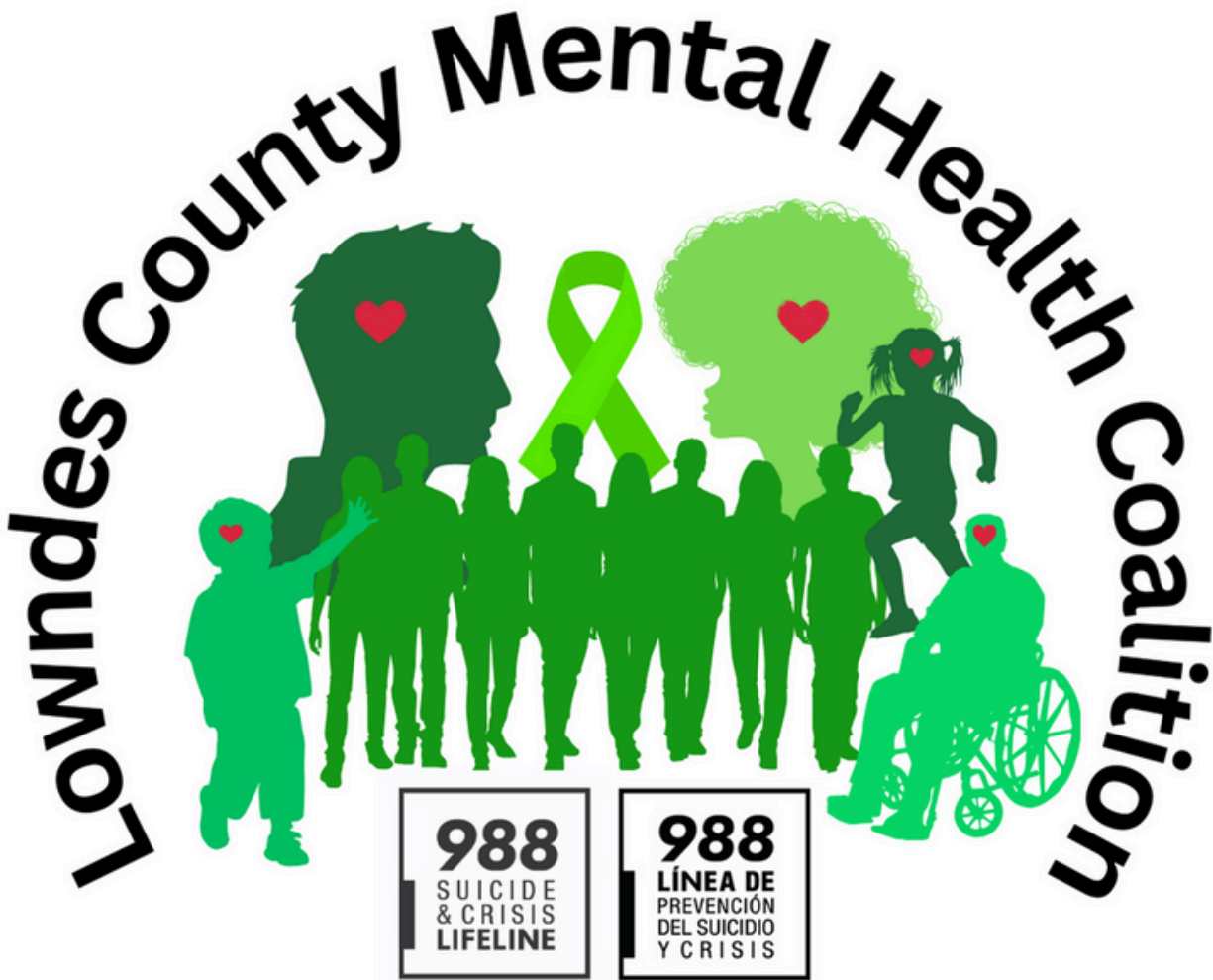
## Healthcare Providers

### South Georgia Medical Center

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# Partner Spotlight



**Established 2023**

The Lowndes County Mental Health Coalition (LCMHC) was established in March 2023, with GVUW and RUCSG as key partners. The coalition has united stakeholders and emphasized reducing stigma related to mental illness and ACEs. It has provided trainings, community outreach, and networking opportunities.

“The partnership aims to expand efforts to other counties, mirroring the LCMHC in Lowndes. The GVUW and partner organizations are crucial to its success.” - Paivi Parssinen, COO, LBHS

# Key Impacts

**1**

Community-Minded  
Mental Health Summit

**200**

attended the 3rd  
Annual Combined  
Awareness Day

**300+**

staff at Legacy  
Behavioral Health  
trained in QPR.

**150**

attended the HOOPS Mental  
Health Takeover Symposium

**550**

attended the 3rd  
Annual Unite  
Dinner with  
keynote speaker,  
Charlie Ward, Jr.

**10,000+**

youth have participated in our Retired  
Athlete program

**3**

United2Prevent  
Board Members  
Certified to  
facilitate QPR.

**300**

attended the  
Breaking Barriers  
Resource Fair

# Prevention and Intervention

## SOUL CARE OF SOUTH GEORGIA

Casey Horne, LCPC has been working with our partnering non-profit staff in conjunction with the Greater Valdosta United Way Mental Health Initiative. Casey is a Licensed Clinical Christian Counselor, whose many years of experience working as a non-profit employee help her understand the unique needs of non-profit staff. "Compassion fatigue, burnout, as well as personal traumas can take a toll on the mental health of non-profit staff. I am overwhelmingly grateful to be able to help these members of our community who give so much of themselves to their organizations," Casey said. Casey provides private counseling sessions to non-profit staff, as well as group training focusing on emotional and mental self-care. This initiative is funded by Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia.

Casey also works with the Youth Impact Center in Lanier County as well as Jesus and Jam in Clinch County. Through her work with these organizations, Casey provides mental health education to students, teaches parenting classes and conducts Community Counseling Days to ensure these counties receive mental health care in their own community.



**"Good mental health is a necessary element to community growth and well-being. Making sure we nurture the mental health needs of non-profit staff will ensure they are able to provide the best possible care to our community."**

**~ Casey Horne, LCPC**

# SOUL CARE OF SOUTH GEORGIA



*"With the ever-growing depression and suicide rates in children and adults, it is more important now than ever, for our children and community to have access to mental health services." - Casey Horne*

**CASEY HORNE, LCPC**  
Christian Counseling & Character Building  
Services

Casey is a South Georgia native who has a heart for children. Casey holds a bachelor's degree in History Education and taught High School History at BCHS. In 2018 Casey began working with the Youth Impact Center in Lakeland, GA, becoming Education Director and running the Character Development Program. Casey returned to school and received her master's degree in the Ministry of Christian Counseling and is now a Licensed Clinical Counselor.

**\*One-on-One Counseling Sessions**  
(for non-profit partners & staff)

**\*Strategic & Practical Mental Health Training**



229.630.5413



soulcareofsouthga@gmail.com

SERVICES MADE POSSIBLE BY GREATER VALDOSTA UNITED WAY & RESILIENT GEORGIA

# Advocacy and Policy Change



President & CEO of Greater Valdosta United Way, Michael Smith has been advocating at the local, state, and federal level for the last 3-4 years to bring the A.L.I.C.E data to the state of Georgia. Georgia is officially the 29th state to adopt the ALICE data.

He has also been a vital part of bringing 2-1-1 to rural South Georgia. We have received funding through a federal earmark to establish a 211 presence in our South Georgia communities. We are beyond proud of our fearless leader.

## ALICE

Asset-Limited-Income-Constrained-Employed

ALICE represents the growing number of families who are unable to afford the basics of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and technology. These workers often struggle to keep their own households from financial ruin, while keeping our local communities running.

## 2-1-1

The most comprehensive source of information about local resources and services in the country.

Over 200 211 agencies in the US provide compassionate community specialists to assist individuals in accessing local resources and services, responding to over 21 million requests annually for basic needs like housing, food, transportation, and healthcare.

# Advocacy and Policy Strengthening Activities

Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia was initiated through the work of Michael Smith, CEO & President of Greater Valdosta United Way (GVUW). Michael attended the 2023 National Hill Day with United Way in June. United Way Hill Day is an annual event organized by United Way Worldwide, a prominent nonprofit organization. This event serves as an opportunity for United Way affiliates, volunteers, and advocates to come together and engage with policymakers and lawmakers on issues related to community and social change.

This year's focus was centered around the Help Act legislation. The HELP Act, which United Way Worldwide has publicly endorsed, will facilitate increased nationwide accessibility and coordination of 211 services and 988 services in order to provide information and referrals throughout the United States for mental health emergencies, homelessness, and other social and human service's needs.

Michael represented United Ways of Georgia State Association as well as Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia. He had meetings with Congressmen Austin Scott and Buddy Carter, Senator Warnock, and Senator Ossoff. He spoke with them specifically about 988 successes, the work of RUCSG and the challenges we face as a rural coalition as well as the challenges our local non-profits face. He also expressed the need to bring 211 into South Georgia.

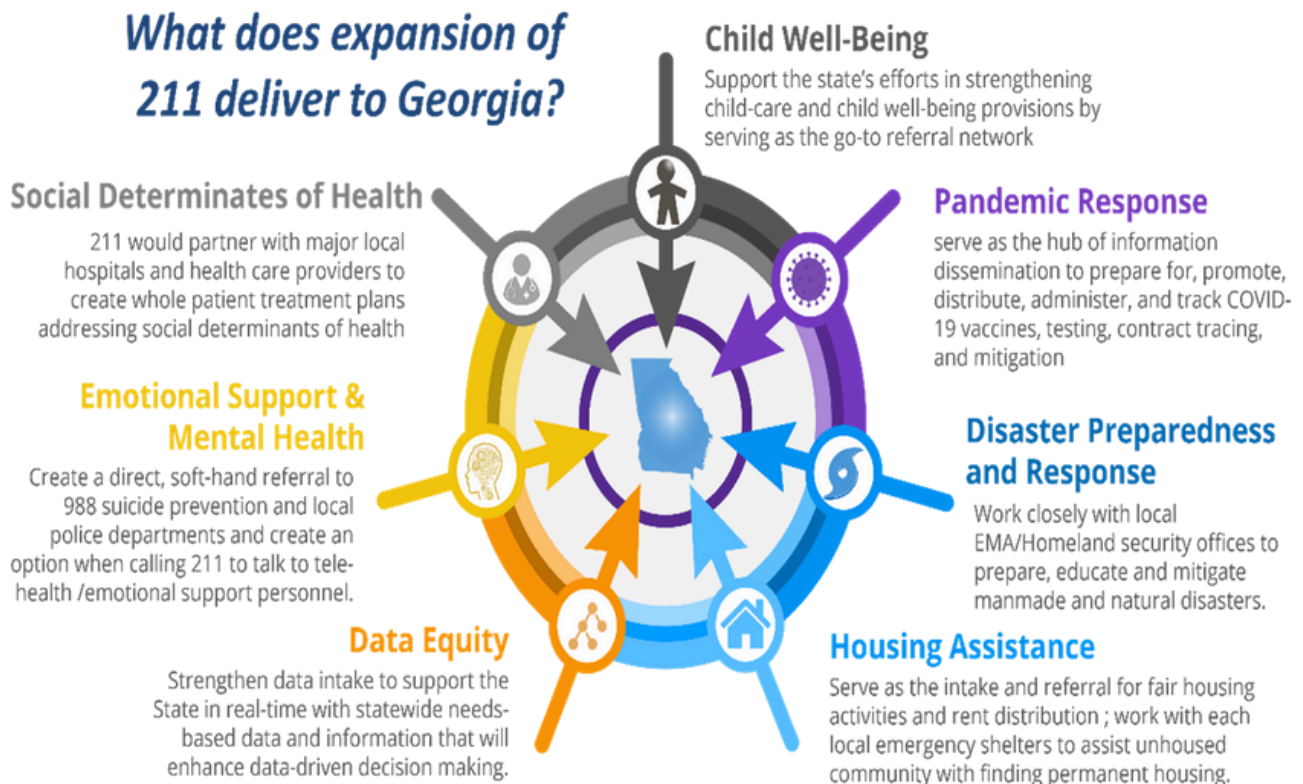
We have met with Senator Warnock and Ossoff and their staffs on several occasions this year. Each time we discuss a multitude of challenges facing our 8-county service area and advocate for the expansion of federal and state dollars to help fund the programs that are aimed at providing solutions to these challenges.

# Systems Change: 2-1-1 Expansion

In 2020, Georgia 211 centers responded to over 400,000 calls, emails, texts, and chat interactions from people seeking help. While 400,000 seems high, there were approximately 300,000 additional contacts to 211 that went unanswered due to high call volumes and limited staffing resources, and this does not include considerations for the significant portion of Georgians who lack access to 211.

In 2023, Hurricane Idalia ripped through our region leaving quite a path of destruction in small rural communities that are known to be scarce in resources. Without the help of 211, many displaced residents did not know where to go for help. It took so much longer for us to relay resource information and help those in need.

We have officially received word that we have secured federal funding to help initiate the implementation of 211 in the 19 counties that are without it. We will start with Lowndes County and work our way around until Georgia has achieved 100% coverage. In the most basic sense, by achieving 100% coverage, Georgia enables access to 211 for residents of rural areas currently left without the critical support 211 provides. Expansion enables access to 211 via wireless/cellular service, as well as traditional landline and VOIP telephone connection.



# Environmental Change

1

## Royal Minds Lowndes County

Greater Valdosta United Way and RUCSG provided funding to help launch Legacy's partnership with Valdosta Housing Authority, "Royal Minds". Legacy therapists will utilize the donations provided in therapy sessions which will be conducted onsite at Hudson Dockett and Ora Lee West. The new partnership will provide access to care to many individuals in need and the Greater United Way's help in making this program a success is greatly appreciated!



2

## Therapy Room Berrien County

Family Connection/Community In Schools of Berrien County has received federal funding to convert a nook into a private room in their building, increasing the likelihood of families agreeing to therapy. The organization will also provide educational services in the newly private rooms, including tutoring for learning loss. The new therapy rooms were furnished with various items through funding provided by Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia.

3

## Calm Down Corner Echols County

We provided classroom support to a Special Education Teacher in Echols County. The funds were used for a sensory area for students providing a safe haven for these scholars to assist them in processing the environment around them.



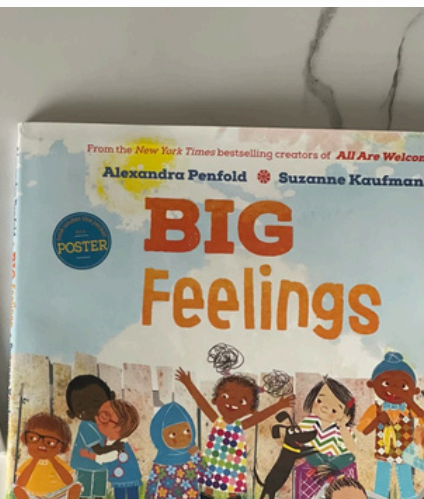


# Family Connection/ Community In Schools of Berrien County

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family connection  
OF BERRIEN COUNTY



# Research: A.L.I.C.E. Data

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed.

ALICE aims to identify and help households living from paycheck to paycheck and would be financially burdened by the cost of an unexpected emergency.

“ALICE is a report about financial hardship and the United Way of Georgia Association brought it into the state this year,” said GVUW CEO Michael Smith.

According to the GVUW’s 2023 annual report, the UWGA led the effort for Georgia to become the 29th state to participate in United for ALICE. Smith served as UWGA Chair from 2022-2023.

The annual report reads, “Based upon the highest quality, unbiased data, Georgia’s report identifies unique and specific demographics and barriers to financial stability within the state’s 159 counties.”

Smith says they’ll have a new ALICE report coming in May this year. He says once they receive the report they will share it with state and local elected leaders and see how the numbers have changed.



Greater Valdosta United Way



## 2021 DATA

*ALICE in Georgia: A Study of Financial Hardship is brought to you by United Ways of Georgia in partnership with United For ALICE, a driver of innovative research and action around financial hardship for **ALICE** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households. United For ALICE and United Ways across Georgia share this work with foundations, government, corporations, and other nonprofits to inform policy and promote positive change for ALICE households.*

**Out of the 3.95 million households in Georgia, over 1.8 million – 47% – had income below the ALICE Threshold of Financial Survival in 2021. In 2007, only 32% had income below the threshold.**

The ALICE Household Survival Budget for a Georgia family of four with two adults, an infant, and a preschooler in 2021 was \$61,164, well above the FPL at \$26,500 and full-time earnings for most low-wage jobs in the state.

The Household Stability Budget, which accounts for a slightly higher standard of living and a 10% savings category, in Georgia reached a high of \$47,112 per year for a single adult and \$96,984 for a family of four depending on county.

**2019 to 2021, the total number of households in Georgia increased by 3% and the number of households below the Threshold increased by 1% (from 1.85 million to 1.87 million)**



### HOUSING AVAILABILITY

*There is a shortage of 200,000 affordable rental units at or below 30% of Area Median Income in Georgia*



### LACK OF SAVINGS

*42% of families below the ALICE Threshold in Georgia have emergency savings or rainy-day funds compared to 80% above the threshold*



### MENTAL HEALTH

*According to the Household Pulse Survey, 22% of respondents below the Threshold reported feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge nearly every day*



### STRUGGLING TO PAY BILLS

*56% of households below the ALICE Threshold in Georgia said it was somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual items such as food, rent or mortgage, car payments, and medical expenses*



Greater Valdosta United Way



**Rural Counties**  
586,313 Georgia households live in predominantly rural counties. 52% of these households fall under the ALICE Threshold.

ALICE Threshold has worsened since 2021, including sustained high levels of food insufficiency, limited savings and assets, continued difficulty paying bills, and feeling of anxiety and depression.



Supply chain issues and inflation pushed prices up across the board - by 8% annually across the U.S. from 2021 to 2022, compared to less than 3% annually in the prior 10 years - straining ALICE households even more.



65% of the 20 most common occupations in Georgia, paid less than \$20 per hour in 2021.



The top 5 occupations with the highest percentage of workers below the ALICE Threshold in Georgia in 2021 were cooks, cashiers, stockers and order fillers, waiters and waitresses, and fast food and counter workers.

Only 23% of people age 16 and over had the security of a full time job with a salary



### ALICE DATA WITHIN GUVW 11-COUNTY SERVICE AREA

COUNTY	HOUSEHOLDS	% ALICE + POVERTY	SINGLE ADULT*	FAMILY OF FOUR*
Atkinson	2,968	61% (1,819)	\$23,016	\$54,384
Bacon	3,874	56% (2,174)	\$23,988	\$54,384
Berrien	6,634	53% (3,532)	\$23,748	\$56,148
Brooks	6,004	57% (3,428)	\$25,404	\$58,548
Clinch	2,361	52% (1,221)	\$23,328	\$54,384
Coffee	14,934	55% (8,284)	\$23,988	\$54,384
Echols	1,327	61% (808)	\$26,124	\$59,496
Jeff Davis	5,246	59% (3,119)	\$23,328	\$52,068
Lanier	3,529	67% (2,370)	\$26,760	\$60,312
Lowndes	45,139	54% (24,329)	\$27,672	\$63,180
Ware	12,763	57% (7,294)	\$23,088	\$54,468

State Median Household Income Average \$66,559

\*Annual Wage for Household Survival Budget

Scan here for more information on County- Specific Data, National Reports, the Economic Viability Dashboard, Legislative District Tool, Wage Tool, and more



# Coalition Trainings

In Year 3, Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia provided trauma informed awareness and outreach across our 8 county footprint. We also offered 4 evidence-based trainings.

Connections Matter was the only training that was not requested. When asked why this training was not selected, community members responded that the length of the training was too long for them. We are working to get more trainers trained in Connections Matter and have looked at splitting up the material into two sessions for next year.

# 266

Trained in QPR.

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)  
In-person – 2 hour training

Our coalition partner, United2Prevent, has taken the lead on this training, as they are the community experts in suicide prevention. RUCSG provided funding to have 3 U2P board members trained as facilitators, and they have been conducting trainings monthly across the region.

# 67

Trained on the CRM

Community Resiliency Model (CRM)  
In-person - 2 hour training

Dr. Jordan Murphy joined us for our inaugural Community-Minded Mental Health Summit and provided the one hour introduction to the Community Resiliency Model to 67 participants during a breakout session.

# 53

Trained on V.A. S.A.V.E

VA S.A.V.E. Training is a free, brief online or in-person course that will help you act with care and compassion if you come across a Veteran who is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide. The acronym S.A.V.E. helps you remember the important steps involved in suicide prevention:

- S: Know the Signs that indicate a Veteran might be thinking about suicide
- A: Ask the most important question of all – “Are you thinking of killing yourself?”
- V: Validate the Veteran’s experience
- E: Encourage treatment and Expedite getting help

# Timeline of Action: Trainings, Prevention, Education, and Awareness

Date	Action	Category: (Training, Collaboration, Event)	Number of Participants
4/10/2023	CFC Moody	Event	200
4/11/2023	Collaboration with Resilient Coastal Georgia	Collaboration	3
4/14/2023	Art in the Park	Event	75
4/18/2023	Coalition Meeting	Collaboration	11
4/20/2023	Breaking Barriers Resource Fair	Event	300
4/20/2023	211 Meeting in Atlanta	Collaboration	2
5/2/2023	Mental Health Workshop (Cook County Family Connection)	Training	10
5/5/2023	SGNN 2023 Conference	Event/Training	65
5/8/2023	Zoom Meeting with Debra Kibbe for Program Evaluation (Georgia Health Policy Center)	Collaboration	3
5/12/2023	Lowndes County Family Connections Resource Center Day	Collaboration	75
5/22/2023	Diversity Meeting	Collaboration	7
5/22/2023	Cook Collaborative Lunch Meeting	Collaboration	24
5/25/2023	CRM workshop training	Training	4
5/25/2023	Mental health Info and resources (Cook County Family Connection)	Training/Education	30
5/30/2023	Diversity Meeting	JEDI	7
6/2/2023	Viewed Crisis Center at Legacy Behavioral Health	Collaboration	3
6/10/2023	Self Care Training (Beautiful Creations and Soul Care of South Georgia)	Training	6
6/12/2023	met with Adrian Rivers from Senator Warnocks office	Collaboration	5
6/13/2023	Coalition Meeting	Collaboration	13
6/15/2023	Leadership Lowndes Panel	Collaboration	26
6/20/2023-6/22/2023	United Way Hill Days	Collaboration/Awareness	115
6/23/2023/6/24/2023	HOOPS Mental Health Symposium	Event	150
6/28/2023	Pie & Partnerships with Family Connections Region 11	Collaboration	14
7/19/2023	Trauma Training (Brooks County)	Training	32
7/27/2023	Teachers Harvest	Collaboration	150
8/8/2023	Launched RUCSG website	Awareness	-
8/11/2023	Trauma-Informed Life; DFCS at Masterpieces	Training	35
8/17/2023	Unite Dinner	Collaboration	550
8/21/2023	Collaboration with Resilient Southwest Georgia(Alex and Quan from Vashti)	Collaboration	3
8/24/2023	Met with Leadership team from DBHDD	Collaboration	14
8/27/2023	Self Care Training (Girls on the Run and Soul Care of South Georgia)	Training	70
8/29/2023	Coalition Meeting (postponed due to preparing for Hurricane)	Collaboration	0
8/30/2023		***Hurricane Idalia***	

# Timeline of Action: Trainings, Prevention, Education, and Awareness

Date	Action	Category: (Training, Collaboration, Event)	Number of Participants
9/8/2023	Trauma-Informed Life; Law Enforcement (Valdosta Police Department, Moody AFB, Lowndes County Sheriff's Office) (Camp Rock)	Training	28
9/20/2023	Echols County Suicide Prevention Training (Legacy Behavioral Health)	Training	43
9/25/2023	Family Connection Collaborative meeting (family violence)	Collaboration	28
9/28/2023	Distinguished Citizen Award Dinner (Ga Dept. of Public Health)	Collaboration	344
9/30/2023	Paws 4 A Cause (Haven)	Collaboration	281
10/10/2023	World Mental Health Day	Prevention/Intervention/Education	250
10/13/2023	"We ALL Face Battles" Tra Battle in Clinch County	Prevention/Intervention	480
11/1/2023	Adrian Peterson: Tackling Mental Health at Hahira Elementary, Hahira Middle, and Berrien Middle; lunch with admin and coaching staff	Prevention/Intervention	1150
11/2/2023	QPR Training with Impact Partner Partnership Health Center	Training	20
12/4/2023	QPR Training with Patti-Cake nonprofit in Tifton	Training	14
1/29/2024	QPR Valwood School	Training	70
2/20/2024	QPR Wiregrass Technical College	Training	103
2/20/2024	Community-Minded Summit: CRM and VA Save offered	All	120
3/1/2024	QPR Raintree Village in Valdosta	Training	29

## Innovative Partnership:



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®  
SOUTH GEORGIA COUNCIL

# Scoutreach

The Council's commitment to remove any barriers that might keep a young person from joining Scouting regardless of their circumstances. Scoutreach can provide anything from camp scholarships, uniforms, handbooks, transportation, and even leadership of a Scout unit.



“When you show youth their possibilities, the opportunities are huge.”

## **The Boy Scouts of America**

is one of the nation’s largest and most prominent values-based youth development organizations. It provides a program for young people that builds character and leadership skills, trains them in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and develops personal fitness.

## **The South Georgia Council**

has provided the Scouting program to 28 South Georgia counties for more than 100 years. This time-honored organization, known to have a positive impact on youth, also makes sure that every child has the opportunity to get involved. That’s where Scoutreach comes in.

## **Making a Difference in the Lives of Youth**

Scoutreach makes it possible for youth to become Scouts regardless of their circumstances. “We serve youth who may not have the opportunity to experience Scouting without the resources that we offer,” says Scout Executive Mark Manchester

“The registration fee may not be much for some families, for others it could mean sacrificing necessities that many take for granted. In an effort to insure that the fee is never a barrier, payment assistance can be provided through Scoutreach.

**Through community partnerships and dedicated volunteers, Scoutreach helps to eliminate barriers that might keep a young person from joining Scouting.**

**By emphasizing ethics and moral values, Scouting addresses many of the concerns of parents in our community. Scouting prepares youth to be leaders, to accept responsibility, and to care about principles and causes beyond their own self-interest.**

\*Scoutreach for the South Georgia Council is funded by the Greater Valdosta United Way, the lead organization in Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia. A total of \$25,000 has been invested into the program since 2022.

# J.E.D.I.

## Justice. Equity. Diversity. Inclusion.

# Diversity Committee

The Diversity Committee and Greater Valdosta United Way have contributed nearly \$100,000 to the Southside Recreation Center; a mainstay in some of Valdosta and Lowndes County's most underprivileged neighborhoods. The facility offers after-school activities and recreational services, including summer camps for up to 70 kids in grades K-5. The center also provides assistance to the elderly residents of Valdosta, Georgia.

The GVUW and the Diversity Committee have played a significant role in reviving the center with state ARPA grants and local funds. In the past year, Southside has received a new air conditioning unit, a new roof, new flooring, and fresh paint on the inside and outside. Additionally, funding the pool and starting operations this year are the plans. To assist some of the smaller nonprofits in obtaining funding, awareness, advocacy, and improving their financial operations, the Diversity Committee has also been corresponding with the Latin Association, the South Street Food Pantry, Quola, and other minority-led nonprofits from the African American and Hispanic communities.

The work that the Diversity Committee has been doing since 2020 is phenomenal. It has produced a new perspective through which to see our community. Additionally, it has made it much easier for us to find new board members, which will enable the Greater Valdosta United Way Board to be more diverse in terms of age, race, industry, and geographic representation.

# Thriving United Way

United Way is definitely committed on a worldwide level to make sure that local United Ways are focused on JEDI. There is a new program that will be coming out called The Thriving United Way.

It will be a national model and, and scope along with sharing of best practices so that other United Ways can grow their efficiencies and effectiveness in their diversity work, their climate, change and mitigation work along with their back office and structural organizational work. We are currently in the first phase of this new program and were selected to be one of the first United Ways to participate.

INAUGURAL  
*Community-Minded*  
**MENTAL  
HEALTH  
SUMMIT**



**Dr. Nitin Patel, MD**  
Legacy Behavioral  
Health Services



**Dr. A.J. Ramirez,**  
Ed.D;LPC:CPCS  
Valdosta State  
University



**Dr. Felix Valdez, MD**  
SGMC & Migrant Farm  
Worker Clinic

**20**

**February**

Tuesday | 8:00am - 3:30pm

Rainwater Conference Center

*Morning breakout sessions focusing on Community Resiliency Model, Veteran and Military culture, and the Legacy Co-responder program.*

*This summit is FREE and open to community stakeholders, agencies, advocates, educators, law enforcement, and first responders.*

For more information, please contact  
Susan Nebel at [snebel@gvuw.org](mailto:snebel@gvuw.org)

*To Register!*

**SCAN  
HERE!**



Lunch will be provided.  
Please register by February 12, 2024

# 120

Participants

# 2

Evidence-Based Trainings

# 40

Organizations Represented

# 16

Counties Represented

# 6

Experts presented and/or conducted training

## Inaugural Community-Minded Mental Health Summit

Tuesday, February 20, 2024  
Rainwater Conference Center

# Agenda

Legacy  
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Resilient & United  
COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH GEORGIA  
A United Way Affiliate

Lowndes County Mental Health Center  
Established 2022

United Way  
Greater Valdosta United Way

8:00-8:25 am	<b>Registration Check-In</b>
8:30-8:35 am	<b>Welcome</b> Michael Smith, President & CEO of Greater Valdosta United Way
8:35-8:45 am	<b>Introduction of Keynote Speaker</b> Mallory Sims, Chief Clinical Officer, Legacy Behavioral Health Services
8:45-9:45 am	<b>“Mental Health Challenges in Children &amp; Youth”</b> Dr. Nitin Patel, MD, Legacy Behavioral Health Services
9:45-10:00am	<b>Mental Minutes (Break)</b>
10:00-11:55 am	<b>Breakout Room 1</b> <b>Community Resiliency Model (DECAL CEU’s available)</b> Facilitator: Dr. Jordan R. Murphy, PhD, RN, CPNP
10:00-10:30 am	<b>Breakout Room 2</b> <b>“Military and Veteran Suicide Prevention”</b> Heather Stephens, LCSW, North Florida/South Georgia VA Health Care System
10:30-10:45am	<b>Mental Minutes (Break)</b>
10:45-11:15 am	<b>“Mental Health Treatment and Support within the Corrections System”</b> Jennifer Taylor, LMFT, Director of Judicial Services, Legacy Behavioral Health Services
11:15-11:55 am	<b>Networking/Vendor Tables</b>
12:00 - 12:55 pm	<b>Working Lunch/Peer Panel (Peer Panel Starts at 12:30 pm)</b> Facilitator: Heather Hatchett Peers: Lauren Saporito, Mary Veal, Renee Hogan, & Sarah Grimsley
1:00 - 2:00 pm	<b>“Masculinity: How Gender Characteristics Contribute to Youth Bullying”</b> Dr. A.J. Ramirez, Ed.D;LPC:CPCS
2:00 - 2:15 pm	<b>Mental Minutes (Break)</b>
2:15 - 2:30 pm	<b>Girls On The Run Exercise</b> Facilitator: Claire Walton, Founding Director, South Georgia Chapter
2:30 - 3:00 pm	<b>“Mental Health within the Hispanic Community”</b> Dr. Felix Valdez, MD, Migrant Farmworker Clinic
3:00 - 3:30 pm	<b>Overview of Trainings/Closing Remarks</b> Stephanie Davis, Crisis Center Administrative Director, Legacy Behavioral Health Services

Our Inaugural Mental Health Summit was a huge success. We heard from 3 experts on topics ranging from youth and adolescent statistics on mental health to mental health within the Hispanic community. We also provided the Introduction to the Community Resiliency Model Workshop facilitated by Dr. Jordan Murphy; V.A. S.A.V.E training facilitated by Heather Stephens with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs; and Jennifer Taylor, LMFT who presented on Legacy Behavioral Health Services Co-responder program that was recently implemented. We had a great turn out with 120 participants. We did conduct a post summit survey and are currently awaiting the data results. We are already looking forward to next year’s summit.

# Summit Speakers

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Dr. Nitin Patel, MD

Dr. Nitin R. Patel is a psychiatrist in Valdosta, Georgia. He received his medical degree from Baroda Medical College and has been in practice for more than 20 years. Dr. Nitin R. Patel has expertise in treating Depression, Anxiety disorders, Bipolar disorder, among other conditions.



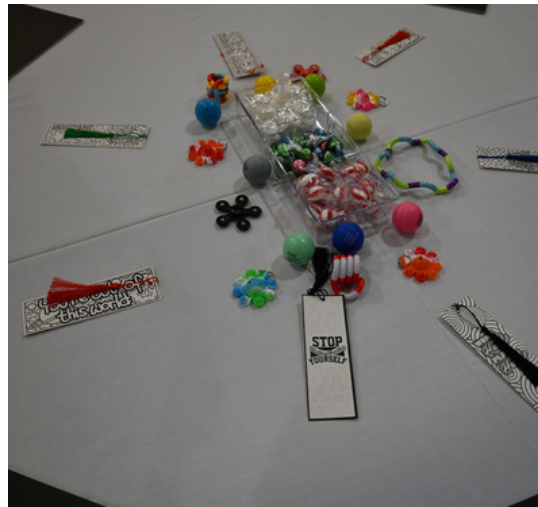
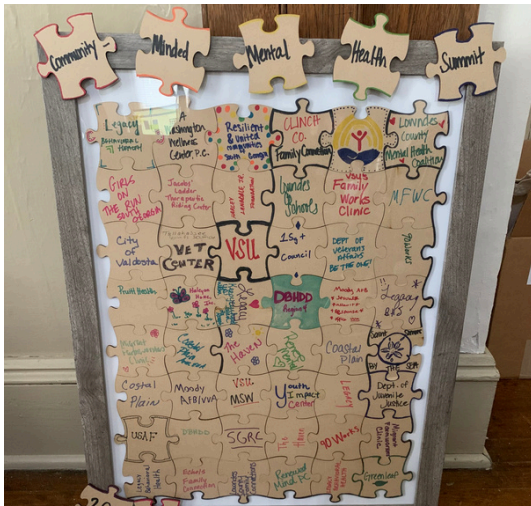
Dr. A.J. Ramirez, EdD, LPC,  
NCC, CPCS

Dr. Ramirez is a Licensed Professional Counselor and a National Certified Counselor with experience working with children, adolescents, adults, and families. She has worked in various aspects of the mental health field since 2007 and is a Certified Professional Counselor Supervisor. When not teaching at the University, she owns and operates L.E.A.F. Therapy Services LLC a private counseling practice in Valdosta, GA that provides affordable and systemic therapy to people in the community.



Dr. Felix Valdez

Dr. Felix Valdez is an internist in Valdosta, Georgia and is affiliated with multiple hospitals in the area, including John D. Archbold Memorial Hospital and South Georgia Medical Center. He received his medical degree from Universidad Nacional Pedro Henriquez Urena and has been in practice for more than 20 years.



# Inspired Action

Want to become a member of Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia? Click the links below to find out more about the impact we are having on our region.

## Resilient & United COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH GEORGIA



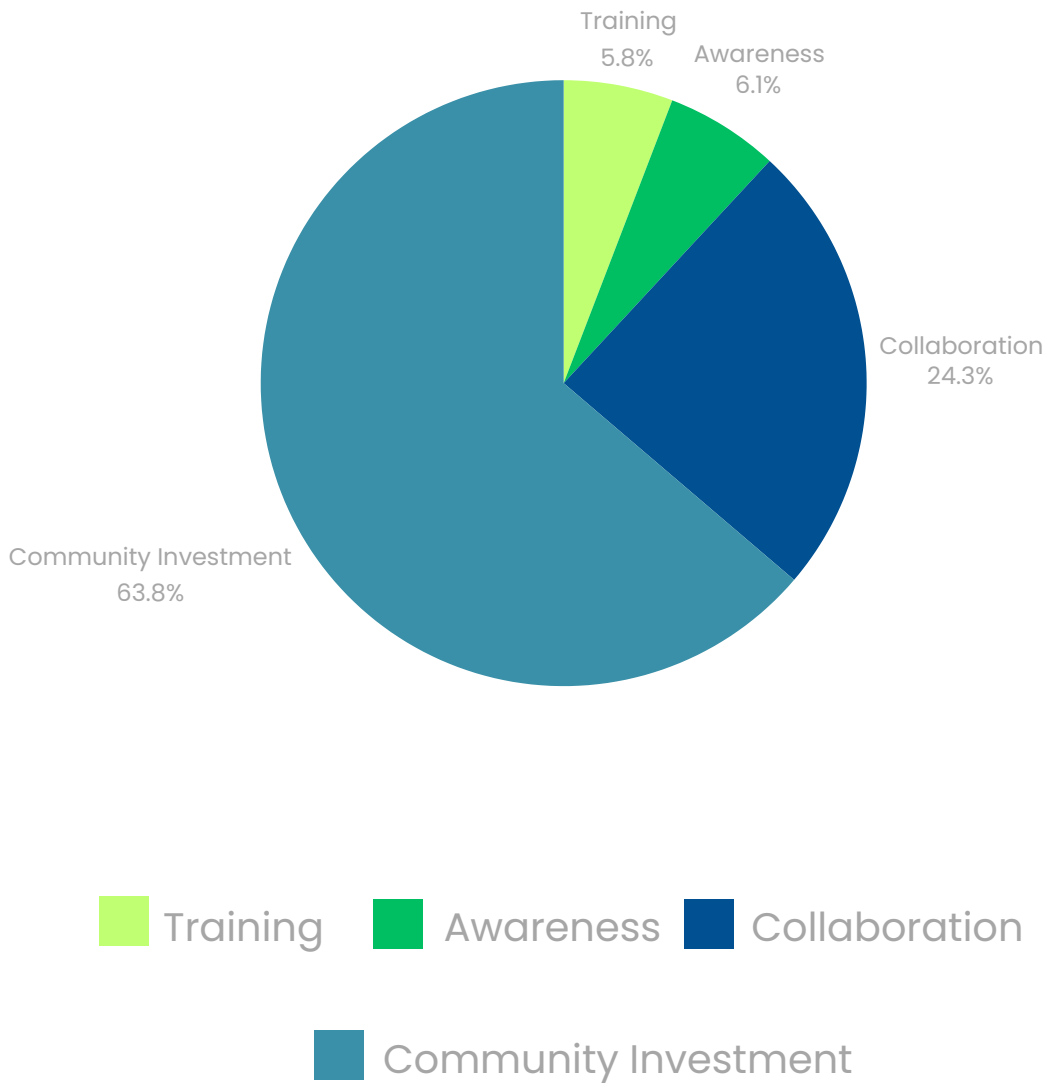
Request a Training or Awareness Event  
If you are looking for training opportunities for your community or organization, please fill out the form linked on right.



Scan the QR code to check out the  
Annual Report for GVUW

Lead Organization:  
Greater Valdosta United Way  
1609 North Patterson Street  
Valdosta, GA 31602  
229-242-2208

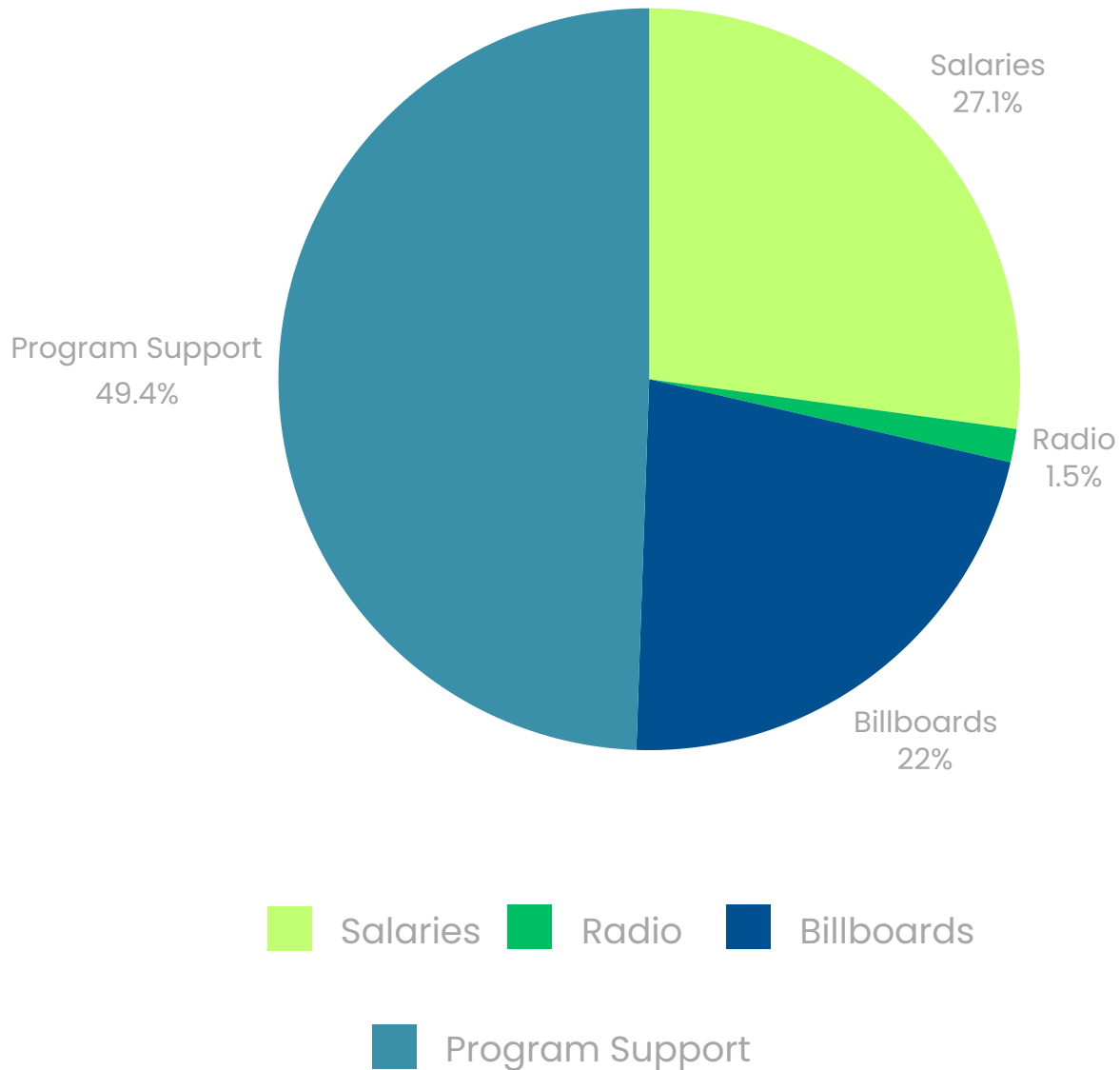
# Resilient Georgia Spending



During the third year of funding from Resilient Georgia, The GVUW/RUCSG spent \$9,153.72 on Trainings, \$9,507.47 on Awareness including billboards and radio ads, and \$38,191.02 on Mental Health Collaboration. Community Investment includes the \$100,000 we have invested into programs through our impact partners who focus on mental health. This totals \$156,852.21 spent during year 3. The remaining dollars will be used to continue spreading awareness through communication, events, and education & training.



# Matching Funds



We had \$54,900 in matching funds for salaries for those employees who work on the Resilient Georgia grant. We had \$44,400 in matching funds from discounts we received for our billboards focused on Mental Health. GVUW matched \$100,000 for program support through our impact partners who are focused on mental health. And we had \$2,940 in matching funds from discounts received on our radio advertisements focused on Mental Health. This makes a total of \$202,240.00.

# Acknowledgements

  
**Resilient**  
GEORGIA

*Legacy*  
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES



Established 2023



We thank you for your  
continued support in our  
programs.

Resilient & United Communities of South Georgia  
1609 N. Patterson St.  
Valdosta, GA 31602  
229-242-2208  
<https://www.unitedwayvaldosta.org/rucsg>