

Dear Friend,

The year 2024 proved, as if we needed a reminder, that you never know what to expect. If you're reading this newsletter, you were likely affected by Hurricane Helene. From a physical standpoint, ACTS was fortunate. We lost electricity only briefly; fortunately, it wasn't long enough to affect the food stored in freezers and refrigerators. It did, however, lead to days of improvisation, as staff and volunteers scrambled to meet emerging needs in a damaged community. I don't want to live through another one, but Helene was a powerful example of how ACTS is a resource for people in crisis.

Helene is one snapshot in time; we can all be proud of the year's work reflected in our **Impact Report** contained in this newsletter. By our count, we provided some type of service to **30,440 individuals**. Food assistance represents 72% of the services provided.

As most of you know, the foundation story of ACTS was a group of churches in 1986 that felt called to pool their efforts to serve the needy. That list of church partners now stands at **71 churches**. We are grateful for each one.

We are also humbled by the many examples of partnership with elements of the Aiken community. The **Martin Luther King Day of Service**; the **Giving Together Christmas Store**, sponsored and staffed again by First Presbyterian; the **ACTS performance by the talented USCA Voices** representing students who are the choral members; the **food donations** by individuals, churches, businesses and even local farmers. As the hymn goes, we are all **"called as partners in Christ's service."**

In our imperfect world, the need for ACTS is continuing to grow. If you visit our building, you can easily see that we are bursting at the seams. While we make the best of what we have, our Board is actively thinking of future facility needs, and where that might take us. I look forward to having more to say on this topic in the near future.

Thank you all for your continuing interest in our work.

Suzanne K. Jackson

Suzanne K. Jackson, Executive Director

"I AM THE
Good Shepherd;

I KNOW MY SHEEP
AND MY SHEEP KNOW ME —
JUST AS THE FATHER KNOWS
ME AND I KNOW THE FATHER —
AND I LAY DOWN MY LIFE
FOR THE SHEEP."

JOHN 10:14-15



Howard University

ACTS had the privilege of hosting students from Howard University at our Aiken and Graniteville locations in March. During their "Alternative Spring Break," these committed students decided to skip the usual spring break trips and instead, traveled across the country to lend a helping hand to communities in need. It was wonderful to witness their commitment and enthusiasm!

More than 100 students assisted with donation intake, clothes sorting, food pantry orders, stocking of food, and re-organizing the client room. Their ambitious demeanor was such a blessing to our mission, as well as to others they helped out around us. The students' decision to dedicate their spring break to acts of service has significantly contributed to our mission and inspired our team and the community.



"For me, it's bigger than just volunteering. It's a way to pay respect to my family, my parents, and people who believed in making sure families had resources. This will always be near and dear to my heart."

DR. CHERYL CUMMINGS



"There are so many faces, so many stories. This is not a food distribution, it's a ministry. Thank God for ACTS that makes this possible, because this is really one of the most important programs in our community."

RICKY BROWN

ACTS VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Cheryl Cummings + Ricky Brown

The line of cars stretched far down the street, matched by the ring of volunteers preparing bags of food for waiting drivers and passengers. It was the last Friday of the month, the New Ellenton food distribution was on schedule, and ACTS volunteer Ricky Brown was at his usual spot.

Brown, a veteran of Aiken area law enforcement, was one of the original point men for a program that has been a community success right from its beginning three years ago.

"I was skeptical at first, but I took it to my church and they jumped right on it," he says. "They brought other churches in on it, and I was surprised at how quickly it picked up. I don't know how the word got out, but the numbers were here from day one." Today, the New Ellenton food distribution serves about 160 individuals each month.

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The ministry, Brown says, is a two way street. "Our volunteers (20 plus on any given day) really look forward to this. It's sort of become like a social club. We start to get to know people, and we enjoy it. I have a lot of things to do on a Friday, but this is a great way to start the day."

His fellow ACTS volunteer – and current board member – Dr. Cheryl Cummings, knows the feeling. Cummings, also an Aiken County native, helped initiate the rural food distribution ministry in Ridge Spring.

"I knew there were all these outlying communities, and I know how hard it is for individuals to even get to downtown Aiken for services. We brainstormed what a community

distribution would look like, involved churches in the areas, and started with Ridge Spring as kind of a pilot. Ridge Spring loved it. The community embraced the idea, they mayor got involved, and everybody just came together."

After that, she said, the rural food distribution program had nowhere to go but up. "To be able to interact with the community members is just amazing. Everybody has their own different story, and they're so grateful."

Beyond the rural sites, Brown and Cummings have teamed to help connect ACTS to Aiken Black Historical Committee activities each February. In conjunction with the Black History parade, ACTS sponsors a community wide food distribution that Brown says "took off like a runaway train." Quickly outgrowing its original site at Smith-Hazel, that distribution is now held in partnership with Aiken Department of Public Safety and Golden Harvest Food Bank, and feeds about 250.

Cummings says that after Hurricane Helene, the need has only increased.

"This is my home, and I can remember my family utilizing services with ACTS. I come from a family of eight, where resources were tight," she says, "For me, it's bigger than just volunteering. It's a way to pay respect to my family, my parents, and people who believed in making sure families had resources. This will always be near and dear to my heart."



Black Historical Committee Partners with ACTS to Host Community Food Distribution

On Friday, February 14th, numerous community members congregated at Aiken Department of Public Safety to volunteer during the Black Historical Committee's annual community food distribution in partnership with ACTS, Golden Harvest Food Bank and Public Safety.

More than 200 individuals received a bountiful array of non-perishable food items, meats and fresh produce, enough for a week's worth of meals based on family size. The day was a perfect example of how our community comes together to serve those who are in need.

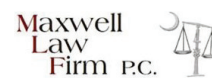


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ACTS CORPORATE PARTNER HIGHLIGHT



America's Home Place has been building homes for families since 1972, creating quality, custom homes with a commitment to craftsmanship and customer satisfaction. As a company, we believe that building homes goes beyond just construction—it's about building stronger communities and brighter futures.

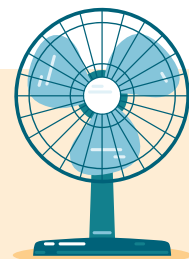
Our CEO puts it best: "We build people to build houses for families to build homes." This philosophy drives everything we do, from developing our team to supporting causes that make a meaningful impact. Partnering with organizations that serve community needs aligns with our mission, as we believe that a home is more than a structure—it's the foundation for families to grow, thrive, and create lasting memories.

By giving back, we aim to strengthen the communities we build in, ensuring they remain welcoming, supportive, and full of opportunity for generations to come.

USCA Life Program

ACTS is honored to partner with the USCA LIFE, a two year program that serves students with intellectual disabilities, providing support and services with a focus on academic and social inclusion. The students are provided opportunities to gain access and skills for gainful employment.

USCA Life Students have participated in meaningful volunteer opportunities with ACTS including assisting in the food pantry, with clothes sorting and in donation intake. Elana Williams, ACTS Operations Manager shares "Hosting these students has been a tremendous benefit to our organization. They've made us stronger, more inclusive, and more aware of the power of diversity in the workplace. Beyond that, they remind us daily of the value of patience, empathy, and the importance of celebrating all achievements, big and small."



Save the Date

**ACTS 17th
Annual Fan Drive**
May 9 - 10 • Lowe's of Aiken

For more information, contact
Jennifer Chastain at 803-649-3800, ext 1104
or by email: jennifer@actsofaiken.org

Special Thanks

WE APPRECIATE THE GENEROUS
CONTRIBUTORS WHO HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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Christmas Games
Kathie and John Fowler's
60th anniversary
James and Mable Bell
Cindy and Dick Rudisill
Grace Dixon and her
performance during ACTS of
Love with the USCA Voices

Gifts and Grants

ACTS annual "Caring and Sharing" Drive - \$205,318 raised for ACTS programs and services

Gregg-Graniteville Foundation to support
assistance in the Graniteville community

USCA Voices ACTS of Love concert which
included a Love Offering and donations of
non-perishable canned items

First Presbyterian Church Christmas Eve offering

First Presbyterian Church and St. Paul Lutheran
Church Souper Bowl Sunday financial and
in-kind donations of non-perishable items

St. James Lutheran Church Heater Drive to
provide heaters in the Graniteville community



HURRICANE HELENE
Community Crisis Fund
for the Central Savannah River Area

Hurricane Helene Community Crisis Fund
at the Community Foundation for the CSRA
provided funding for food, utility assistance
and rent assistance

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST VOLUNTEERS

Corey Ryans
Candy Birkhauser
Sarah Morris
Stefany Gonzalez Najera
LuAnne Liebrezeit
Alexandra Tyner
Ashley Ingram
Nicole Borja
James Costigan
Stephanie Strickland
Elaine Polewski
Deno Verenes
Julia McKeon
Amaya Walker

Debbie Hill
Lucas Dolean
Cheryl Yates
Lori Boetto
Marcus Wilkinson
Savannah Golden
Jody Horwitz
Noe Geurrier
Joe Destito
Hamilton Patrick
Robin Watson
Melissa McKnight
Louisiana Sanders
Kathy Samaha



ACTS Needs

Please consider donating these
items in support of our clients:

- » Jelly (no glass)
- » Canned Chicken
- » Canned Beans
- » Can Openers

Resale Stores Needs:

- » Gently used housewares & furniture

Please call 803-649-3800 for more
information or with any questions.



PROVIDING HOPE
TO OUR
Neighbors in Need

MAIN OFFICE

340 Park Avenue, SW, Aiken

Office Hours

Monday - Friday: 9 am - 5 pm

Administration: 803-649-3800

CLIENT SERVICES

Monday - Friday:

11 am - 3 pm, by appointment

Aiken: 803-642-5919

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

@actsofaiken

@actsresalestoreaiken

@actsofgraniteville

ACTS OF AIKEN RESALE STORE

401 Hayne Avenue, Aiken

Hours

Monday - Friday:

10 am - 5 pm

803-226-0134

ACTS OF GRANITEVILLE RESALE STORE

50 Canal Street, Graniteville

Hours

Monday - Friday:

10 am - 5 pm

803-392-7022

info@actsofaiken.org

www.actsofaiken.org

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