

# 100 Years of Hope and Care

SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER

## Successes

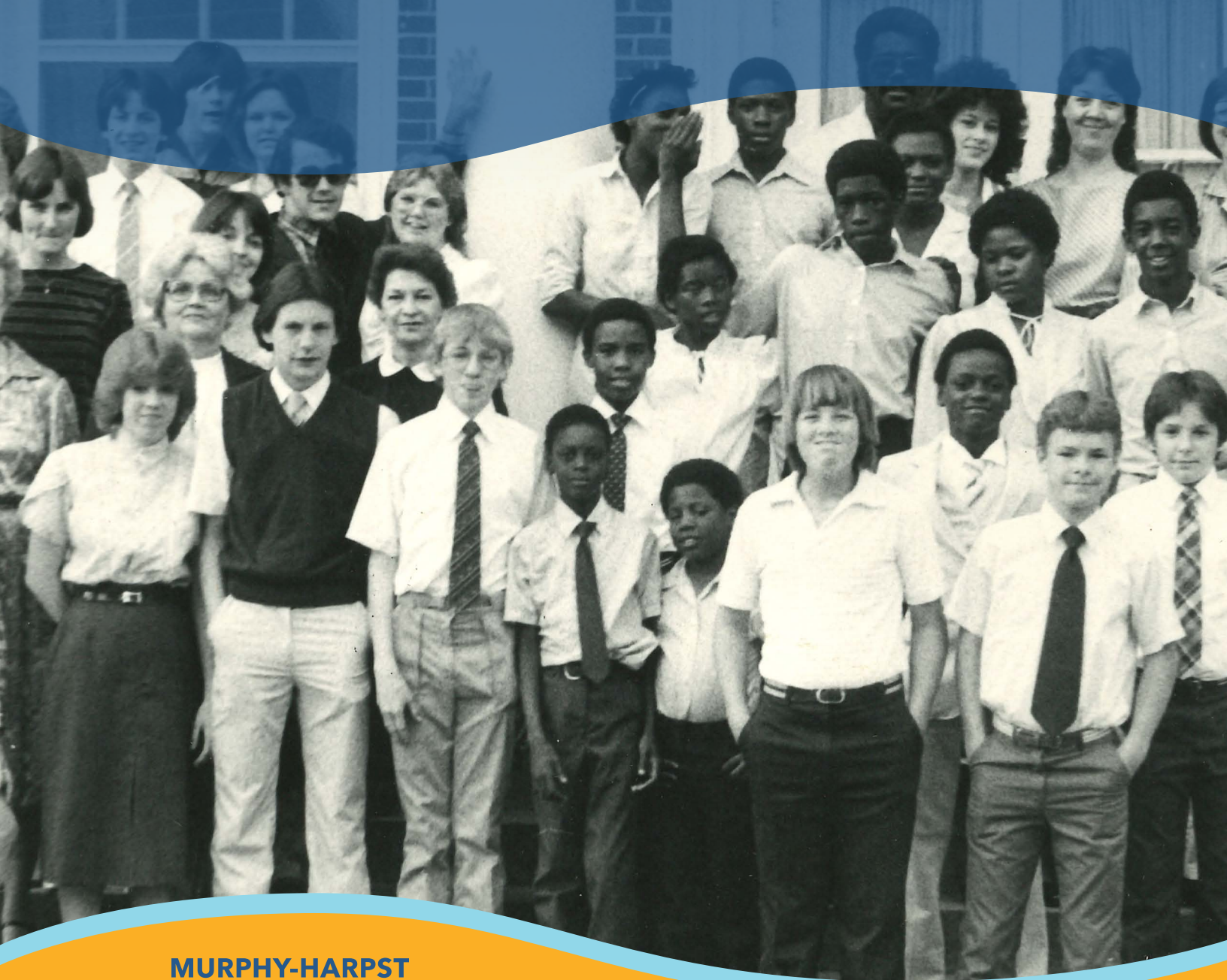
Brittany's Story

## Services

Evolve Initiative Update

## Support

Supplies for Kid's Comfort



MURPHY-HARPST

# 100

1924 – 2024

A Century of Hope & Care

MURPHYHARPST.ORG



## Our Mission

Provide a safe and nurturing environment where severely abused and neglected children and teenagers can thrive and heal toward a goal of re-engaging with society and leading productive lives.

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 MurphyHarpst

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*Murphy-Harpst is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer*

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**Rev. Dr. Beth Sanders**  
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# Letter from the President

Friends of Murphy-Harpst,

When Ethel Harpst led the young ones in her care to their new home on the hill in Cedartown a century ago, few could imagine the lasting impact her determination would have on generations of Georgia's most vulnerable children. Grounded in faith, and driven by love, Miss Harpst reached out to the many made homeless during the influenza outbreak of the 1920s. Following where God led, she opened the Ethel Harpst Home for orphans in 1924. A few years later Sarah Murphy, a Spelman College graduate, followed a similar divine call, opening a one-room schoolhouse in her own community, before she and her husband took in children left languishing and alone by the pandemic and the Great Depression.

Since those first days, Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers has continued to respond to God's call to meet the critical needs of families and youth across Georgia. Today we are confronted by a growing mental and behavioral health crisis among youth in the foster care system, with a lack of available placements for them to heal and thrive. Along with our historic residential treatment facility and specialized foster care services, Murphy-Harpst is expanding its services around the state to address this child welfare emergency. Innovations like our Evolve Initiative with small neighborhood-based homes are providing further the essential therapeutic care and placements that have been lacking for children, offering family support through an array of services within local communities.

We can stand in the gap for these children because of the determination and compassion of our Board of Directors, the MHCC staff, and our many donors and church partners who generously respond year after year, month after month, to give them life and hope. With this Spring newsletter we celebrate with you 100 years of God's faithfulness to care for the young ones through the mission of Murphy-Harpst, and we embrace together God's continuing call for their flourishing.

All my best,

M. Scott Merritt | President & CEO



## Supplies Needed for Our Kids

Scan the QR code to see our wish list on Amazon.com. Thank you for helping us make a home for our children.

### We Need Sunscreen

Keeping our 70 (or so) kids safe in the sun is a challenge. The amount of sunscreen that we go through could be measured in gallons. If you can help us gather a tube of sunscreen or two ahead of the summer season we would greatly appreciate it.

### Linens and Love

When children arrive under our care, whether it's our Cedar-town campus or in our Evolve Homes, we need basic furnishings to make them feel at home and know they are cared for. From bedding to bath towels and more, your help can give a child a space that feels like their own and eases them into being comfortable in their new home.






[Buy Tickets!](#)

## Upcoming Centennial Event

# THE 1924 CENTURY CELEBRATION 2024

Thursday Evening, September 19th, 2024

Piedmont Driving Club, Atlanta

Please join us and bring a friend for an unforgettable evening of celebration, reflection, and inspiration as we honor the past and look forward to the next 100 years of serving Georgia's most vulnerable children. Together, we will reaffirm our dedication to creating a brighter future for the youth of Georgia.

MURPHY-HARPST

100

## 100 Years of Hope and Care

The Rev. Dr. Beth Sanders, North West District Superintendent of the North Georgia Annual Conference, United Methodist Church, and member of Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers Board of Directors, preached at the October annual meeting of the Conference's United Women in Faith at Smyrna First United Methodist Church. She addressed the theme of the meeting — We Believe in Love in Action that Changes the World — with the scripture 1 John 3:16-19, and drew upon the life of Sarah McLendon Murphy, co-founder of Murphy-Harpst.

"God is love, and Jesus is God's love in action," Rev. Sanders began, "God's love in action that we see and experience in Jesus is all compassion, a cross-shaped compassion, that touches everyone, including those left out and left behind. This sacrificial love and compassion reveals the life expected of those who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe in love in action that changes the world."

Rev. Sanders reminded the gathered that the Methodist Women's Home Missionary Society had appointed Miss Ethel Harpst to Cedartown, where she would establish a children's home a century ago, and that it was two faithful women at the heart of what is today Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers. She illuminated her research on the life of Sarah Murphy\*. Born in 1892 to former enslaved persons, Sarah lost her mother at age 4. By 12, she was selling mail-order flavorings to support the household.

At 13 she attended an industrial school in nearby Rome, landing a teaching job that funded her leaving home to attend Spelman College.

"Yet something kept her spirit of compassion uneasy," Sanders explained. Sarah once described a dream in which she was walking "alongside a great canal. It was deep and swift, and on the other side was a fence. There was a woman in the canal digging the ground out from under me about as fast as I could walk. I was fenced in all around. Then I came to a gate. I heard a voice say, 'Go through the gate, Sarah, and help your people.'"

\*Rev. Sanders learned many of the stories of Sarah Murphy's life and inspiration from the revised edition of the book *Mothers are Always Special*, by famed Atlanta journalist and storyteller, Celestine Sibley (1985. Peachtree Publishers).





strength and courage was beginning to falter. She decided to put it up to the Lord she had believed in and trusted all her life. She got down on her knees and prayed. 'If I'm intended to go on, God, send me a sign. A dollar, God, send just one dollar.' She took a walk to hear a word from the Lord. When she came back, a little boy ran to meet her, waving a crumpled dirty one-dollar bill. 'Look what I found by the railroad track, Mama Sarah!' It was the sign Sarah needed to keep going."

## “ We'll Make Room

— Sarah Murphy

That dream inspired her to leave Spelman to go back home to Grady and open a school. She married a fine man, Marion, who everyone called, "Shug," and soon they welcomed a daughter, Divinia, to their family. By spending summers studying at Spelman, Sarah completed her degree while continuing to serve the children in her community. Sadly, Sarah's efforts were challenged by tragic events throughout the rest of her life, beginning with the death of her beloved daughter. A broken heart did not cloud Sarah's compassion. Caring for a neighbor who would die in childbirth, Sarah's love moved her to action that changed her and other's lives.

"The woman's husband had long left," Sanders recounted the story. "There was no food. At daybreak, spent and weary, Sarah bundled up the new baby, gathered the five older children and took them down the road to her house. That was when Sarah became 'Mama Sarah.'"

As more children arrived in the years following, Sarah saw that the vision of the gate she had seen at Spelman was about more than teaching, but also about feeding and clothing vulnerable children. "You come right in here," said Mama Sarah. "We'll make room." Children continued to arrive at her door; reaching upwards of 50.

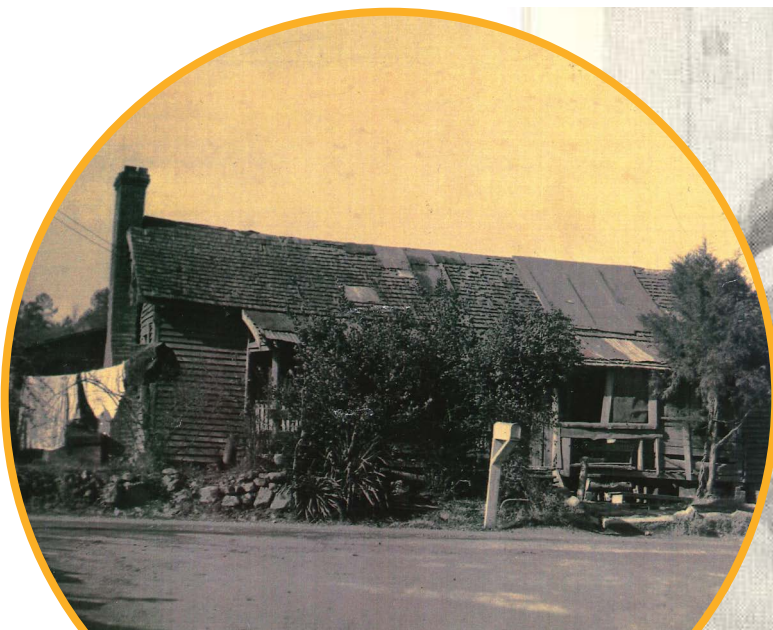
What came next changed Sarah's life, said Sanders. "Sarah's

Sarah was encouraged further when she won \$1000 from a national radio program, the Good Neighbor Award. That inspired Mama Sarah's dreams of a "real home" with modern comforts. Yet the setbacks continued when a fire burned the Murphy's homestead. Sarah was out, but Shug was able to rescue all the children, but one infant. The tragedy gripped the community which rallied to set up lodging in the schoolhouse and raised \$45,000 to make the children's home a reality. Shug did not live to see it built. Sarah would soon follow, stricken while working to ready the home.

Recalling the words from 1 John, Sanders concluded: "Through it all, Sarah Murphy believed in love in action, leaving a legacy of compassion for those in need. Though Mama Sarah and Miss Ethel did not work side by side in life, their legacies merged in 1984 when the Women's Division brought the two homes together. Today Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers is their legacy of love in action that changes the world."



Beth Sanders is District Superintendent, North West District of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church and a member of the MHCC Board of Directors





# Volunteer Spotlight

## Mrs. Mason & Commando Equine-Assisted Therapy Program

Jill Mason and her horse, Spanish Commando, lovingly called "Commando," had a remarkable bond for over 20 years before he passed away in 2019. Mrs. Mason was an avid rider, and Commando was her loyal, loving companion. "Commando was an incredible horse, very sweet, loving, sensitive, and very devoted to me, as I was to him. I rode him four to five days a week, and he always took care of me."

"Commando had a great life on this Earth, and I promised him that I would help other horses in any way I could in his name."

After learning of Murphy-Harpst's Equine Program in 2020, Mrs. Mason wanted to help other children have the same deep, healing relationship with horses that Commando gave her. First, she donated Commando's equipment. Next, Mrs. Mason helped upgrade the arena. With her financial support and sand donated by Vulcan Materials, Murphy-Harpst horses and residents now enjoy a first-class riding experience in the "Spanish Commando Memorial Arena."

"Now, all the Murphy-Harpst horses can ride in an arena of the highest quality, which greatly benefits their legs and creates a better experience for the rider."



Mrs. Mason continued her investment in the Equine Program by donating equipment to maintain the arena, three large fans for the barn to keep the horses cool in the summer, and a manure spreader to keep the soil rich in nutrients where the horses graze.

"Commando and I are very happy to help with the care of the Murphy-Harpst horses, who are, in turn, helping to meet the emotional and spiritual needs of the Murphy-Harpst residents. It is said that the emotional and spiritual bond between a horse and a rider is unlike any other. I can certainly attest to having had such a bond with my beloved horse, Commando."

**To learn more about how you and your organization can volunteer with Murphy-Harpst, please contact Karlie Clifton, [kclifton@murphyharpst.org](mailto:kclifton@murphyharpst.org)**



## Team Spotlight

### Cora Canty

Cora started working at Murphy-Harpst on January 24th, 1986

Positions held: Cottage Life Assistant, Cottage Leader, Therapist, Acting Personnel Coordinator, Prevent Team Coordinator, Cottage Supervisor, Social Worker for former Outdoor Wilderness Program, Public School Liaison, and School Services Coordinator

"The children of Murphy-Harpst have always been the highlight of my time here. Over the years, I have continuously had kids tell me that I CANNOT retire. When I ask them why, I always receive the same answer: 'We need you.' So, I find myself staying year after year, and since I keep staying, one year turned into thirty-eight!" Our youth often refer to Cora as "their grandma!"

"When I started working at Murphy-Harpst, I wasn't married, but I got married and had all my children while working here, and the staff and our residents have always been supportive. Several colleagues came to my wedding, and they were there again through all of my pregnancies. Staff came to my house to support me, and celebrated me bringing life into the world: three girls! Now, I recently became a grandmother! Murphy-Harpst has been there for me while I built my family, and has accordingly, become a part of it too. I get to come to work every single day and see my family. Every child and adult has become one of my own."



# Veteran Team Members

## 20+ Years of Service at Murphy-Harpst

Cora Canty	38 Years in 2024
Karen Gibson -	34 Years in 2024
Teresa Ammons	29 Years in 2024
Nancy McCarson	29 Years in 2024
Susan Stroup	27 years in 2024
Carol Peace	25 Years in 2024
Stephen Brooking	24 Years in 2024
Jason Murphy	24 Years in 2024
Daffie Roggow	24 Years in 2024
Vicky Wright	23 Years in 2024
Joann Wright	22 Years in 2024
Roshelle Brown	21 Years in 2024

In a Word, what does Murphy-Harpst Mean to You?



# Cemetery Clean-Up

In the Fall, several youth and staff volunteered to help the Polk County Cemetery Preservation Committee clean-up the Simpson Cemetery where Sarah Murphy is buried. The site was substantially overgrown and had been overtaken by the forest. It was very HARD work! And our residents impressed the committee with their spirit of volunteerism and joy in the labor as they worked alongside members of the community and with relatives of Mama Sarah!





# Celebrating a Year of Innovative Impact

## The Evolve Initiative

The Evolve Initiative, with small community-based group foster homes, provides safety, security, and evidenced-based therapeutic services for foster children with limited placement options and severe needs. Most youth have had multiple failed placements and reside in hotels or are exiting psychiatric treatment. Intensive wrap-around services promote resiliency, positive coping skills, and life skills.

## Outcomes

**2023 New Homes:** 1 Conyers | 2 Augusta

**2024 Expansion:** 4 Augusta Homes

**21** Total Kids Served

**62%** of Youth Came from Hotels

**38%** Came from Psychiatric Treatment

**82%** Improved Behaviors

**78%** of Youth Exited to Successful Destinations

**4** Were Reunified with Family or Adopted

**3** Transitioned to Other Programs with Improved Behaviors

## Story

After entering the foster care system, 10-year-old Sam had anything but the stability necessary to recover from trauma. Traditional solutions could not accommodate his complex needs. He bounced between psychiatric hospitals, foster homes, residential programs, and hotels. Sam was then welcomed to the Evolve Project. He was immediately provided intensive, in-home mental health services, enrolled in school and tutoring, and worked daily with a behavioral therapist. Sam's consistent routine, medication management, and treatment plan helped address his lifelong trauma. After one month, Sam's grandmother began weekend visits. The team helped her learn Sam's daily routine and how to implement his behavioral treatment plan. Sam started having weekend trips to his grandmother's house. Because of his progress, Sam was reunited with his grandmother as his parental guardian. The family is still connected to the Murphy-Harpst team and receives regular aftercare to help them continue to grow together as a family.

## 100 Stories Brittany's Story



I arrived at Murphy Harpst when I was around 14 years old. I had been to group homes, foster homes, and hospitals since I was eight years old, over 40 placements, and thought, "this place is no different from the others." I arrived very guarded but as I was doing intake I was introduced to my therapist, Miss Ginger Bryant, who seemed to really care about me and my well-being. It was almost like an instant connection I made with her and she probably was unaware of how much I trusted her already.

I remember first walking into the intake house and meeting the staff. It was unlike other homes I walked into. They sat down with me and asked me about myself, my likes and dislikes. They went over my medication with me and helped me understand what each medication was for and how much I took. Until that moment I had honestly no idea why I was taking the medication and what the purpose was. It hit me that this place was different from everywhere else I've been.

Weeks went on and I started to open up more; I was learning I could trust people around me. I was moved to the girl's cottage. I got a little overwhelmed moving over there and definitely made some mistakes, but I was never pushed away. Ms. Becky always held me accountable for my actions, but she also showed compassion and that she wanted the best for me.

I truly believe if God didn't place Murphy-Harpst in my life at 14 that my whole life would be different than it is now. I'm a proud mother of two amazing kids that are both in high school. I've been married for 18 years, and we've been able to build a beautiful life together.



**Read the full story  
at [murphyharpst.org](https://murphyharpst.org)**



# Winn Courtyard Dedication



We dedicated our new recreation area on the Cedartown campus in honor and memory of the late Judge Dan Peace Winn on November 2. The Winn Courtyard and Recreation Area houses a basketball court as part of the Hope Hall complex for male residents and was made possible through a gift from his family.

Judge Winn, a native of Douglasville and longtime resident of Cedartown, died in 2016 at the age of 94. An esteemed jurist, he retired in 1988 after more than two decades as a Judge of the Superior Court of Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit of Georgia, after which he served as a Senior Judge for the State of Georgia until his death. Judge Winn was interred at Arlington National Cemetery, having been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medals for service in the U.S. Marine Air Corps in the Marianas Islands and Guam during World War II. He later obtained the rank of Major in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. Early in his career Judge Winn served as Assistant Attorney General for the State of Georgia and was elected for several terms as Polk County Solicitor and Solicitor General for the Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit. He also served as President of the World Jurist Association.

Judge Winn's commitment to the education and well-being of the youth of Georgia is noted on the Courtyard's memorial plaque, which was revealed at the dedication, and reads in part, "This recreation area is dedicated in his memory so that children may thrive."

"We are grateful for the generosity of Judge Winn's family that made this addition to our campus possible, allowing the youth that we serve more opportunity to move from trauma toward healing and flourishing," said M. Scott Merrit, president and CEO of Murphy-Harpst.



# Tributes

## IN HONOR OF

Lawrence and Betty Ann Abblitt  
Luca Timothy Adams  
Nancy Alexander  
Derek and Diane Orado Allen  
Nadine M. Anderson  
Diana Baber  
Gov. Roy and Marie Barnes  
Charlotte, Anna, and Natalie Black  
Devan and Hailey Black  
Pam Bohlander  
Ron and Pam Bohlander  
Howard and Kim Boyd  
Phil Brewster  
MariAnna Brown  
Rev. Dr. Robert C. Brown  
  
Bob and Janet Campbell  
Scott and Shannon Campbell  
Martha Carroll

Ricky Carter  
Sarah "Marty" Childs  
Sandra Clarke  
Karlie Clifton  
Rev. Tamlyn Collins  
Diana Dawson  
Eulita Dykes  
Dr. Beth Edwards  
Dr. Scott Edwards  
Julie Edwards  
Richard and Kristin Ennis  
Rev. Burch Fannin  
June Given  
Roberto Gonzales  
Harmony Grove (Lilburn) UWF  
Thelma Wells Group

Susan Harvin  
Meredith Carter Hewatt  
Rev. Nanci and Steve Hicks  
Brinnon and Brittany Hines  
Rev. Dr. Coy and Linda Hinton  
Ben Joiner  
Chuck and Carole Juray  
Pamela Kramer  
Larry and Lynn Kuglar  
Morgan Landers  
Rev. Mary Gene Lee  
Diane London  
Barbara Long  
Rev. Dr. Gary B. MacDonald  
Rev. Dr. Gary MacDonald  
and Dr. Heidi Miller  
Kam and Debra Malone  
Theresa McDaniel

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Terry and Wanda Taylor  
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Bethpage United Women in Faith  
  
Bethpage United Methodist Church  
Hal M. Storey  
Don Yelton

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Linda Merrill  
Robert and Jean Miller  
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Sally Morgan  
Becky Morris  
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Jerry and Glenda Walden  
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Darlene Wallace  
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Rebekah Wilson  
Nila Winn  
  
Linda Young  
Ryan Zimmerman

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Dawn J. Austin  
Rev. Leland and Alice Bagwell  
Linda Bell  
Sheila Benson

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Shelor, Paul and Meg Sparwath, Beth  
Webb Interiors, Colt and Amy Whittall,  
Hollie Wiedman, Catherine Wilson  
Interiors, Ione Wohlhueter, &  
Elizabeth York  
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Betty Jean Burrell  
Liberty (Hephzibah) Methodist Women  
Michael and Mary Butler Bates  
Ruth M. Cain  
Nancy L. Blackwelder  
Harlem United Methodist Women



## IN MEMORY OF

Joy Elizabeth Clift

Meredith Coccia

Lynn Story Cody

Martha Sue Crawley

Gwen Cross

David Crow

Margaret C. Davis

deceased members

Kay Driggers

Bill and Elizabeth Edge

Courtney Lynn Edge

Elizabeth Edge

Elizabeth Edwards

Maj. Jesse Flanigan, IV, USAF RET

Niels Friis

Charmet O. Garrett

Rev. Dr. George Robert Gary

Gene Gillespie

Martha Hendry Good

James M. Haddle, Jr.

Ethel Harpst

Doyle and Gene Harris

Nat Harwell

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Reba M. Landrum

Lamar P. McEachern

Mary Lindsey Lewis

Wesley and Dianne McCann

Frances Lowry

Hoschton United Methodist Church

Margaret S. Adams

Bob and Elaine Martin Jr.

Tom and Marjorie McArthur

John Reese

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Alex McKeeman

Mac and Thelma McMillan

Jim and Betty McNiff

Anne Medlock

Kathleen Moore

William Carl Morris

Charles and Lillian Niemeier

Bill Ogletree

Ernest and Shirley Olsen

Carroll and Gwen Perkins

Joan M. Porter

Malcolm E. Powell

Samuel Leonidas Powell

Clarence Price

Olivia Jane Rush Ray

Joseph R. Renard

Jimmy Riddle

Steve Roberts

Brenda Shadrix

Rev. Marion and Marysue Shivers

Frances Marie (Wustrack) Smith

MaryGrace Smith

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Tommy Sullivan

Krista Tennyson

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Elizabeth Wallace Tipton

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Tammie Wilson

Tony Wilson

Dan Winn

Richard Womack

Doug Wood

Arlene Woody-Towe

Kristine Holcomb Wright

Commando

## GIVEN BY

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**Murphy-Harpst**  
LIFE AND HOPE FOR CHILDREN

Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers  
740 Fletcher Street  
Cedartown, GA 30125

# Volunteer Opportunities For Summer

Host or Sponsor

## Summer Fun Fridays

During the summer, we have a special activity and lunch for our kids on Fridays. This is a great opportunity for Business Teams or Church Groups to help host or sponsor in a specific and impactful way.

Fridays in June and July.

2-3 hour time commitment.

Provide Lunch for 75-85+ Host Team



**Sign Up Today!**

To learn more about how you and your organization can volunteer with Murphy-Harpst, please contact Karlie Clifton, [kclifton@murphyharpst.org](mailto:kclifton@murphyharpst.org).



Upcoming Centennial Event



Buy Tickets!

Join Us For

1924 THE CENTURY 2024  
CELEBRATION

Thursday Evening, September 19th, 2024

Piedmont Driving Club, Atlanta