



Murphy-Harpst

Building Futures

Inside Murphy-Harpst Academy

2024-2025

Impact Report

Fall 2025 Newsletter



Murphy-Harpst Academy

A Holistic Approach to Healing and Learning

Engaging with Our Community

Building Stronger Connections Together

Support

A Thank You to our Partners and Donors

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.org

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Murphy-Harpst is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

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A Letter from Scott

Friends of Murphy-Harpst,

As we move into our second century, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to each member of the Murphy-Harpst community—our staff, donors, and friends. Your dedication and support are at the heart of the healing and growth made possible for the children and youth in our care. This is especially evident in the laughter and learning that fills our classrooms this time of year.

Education has always been central to our mission. Our founders, Ethel Harpst and Sarah Murphy, were teachers who established schools for vulnerable children nearly a century ago. Today, that legacy continues through Murphy-Harpst's Glen York Academy, where learning and healing go hand in hand.

Located on our Cedartown campus, the Academy provides a stable, supportive environment for youth who have experienced significant trauma. Our team of educators, therapists, and para-professionals work together to build resilience, restore confidence, and reignite a love of learning. This newsletter offers a closer look at the Academy's mission and the outcomes it helps achieve. I am most proud of this educational commitment across all our programs—from the campus Academy to our Evolve Initiative and Specialized Foster Care—where students are supported in their transitions to vocational training, college, and to living healthy, stable lives.

As Georgia continues to rely on Murphy-Harpst for innovative child welfare solutions, we are expanding, opening new residential units and planning for future growth. With this comes a growing need for trauma-informed, high-quality classroom care. While our current Academy space below the chapel has served generations well, we are working toward new facilities that will meet evolving educational and therapeutic needs. Achieving this goal will require vision, perseverance and the ongoing support of our steadfast partners.

As we look toward this future, I want to thank you for continuing to stand with us and for your commitment to improving the lives of Georgia's children and youth.

All my best,

Michael Scott Merritt, President and CEO

Leadership Spotlight

Murphy-Harpst Welcomes Linda Young as New Board Chair

We are thrilled to announce that Linda Young has been appointed as the new Chair of the Board of Directors for Murphy-Harpst Children's Center. A dedicated educator and advocate, Linda has a remarkable 35-year history of supporting at-risk youth. Her connection to our organization is longstanding, beginning with her fundraising efforts three decades ago before she officially joined the board in 2018.

Linda succeeds our outgoing chair, Martha Carroll, who served with distinction for six years and will continue to be a vital part of our board. In her new role, Linda will focus on increasing board engagement, expanding our key programs, including the Evolve program for older youth, and bolstering our presence in the community. We are confident that her leadership will help us continue our mission of providing essential services to children in foster care throughout Georgia.



Scan to read more

2 | Letter from Scott & Leadership Spotlight

Murphy-Harpst Academy

More Than Just a School, It's a Family

For the children who arrive at Murphy-Harpst, school is often a place of anxiety and failure. Unstable home environments and the trauma they've endured have left them behind academically, struggling to keep up in traditional school settings. But here, on our campus, a different kind of school awaits them, Murphy-Harpst Academy. It's more than just a place of learning; it's a place of healing, growth, and family.

At Murphy-Harpst's Glen York Academy, our COGNIA-accredited school, we don't just see a student who is behind in math or reading. We see a whole child who wants to be able to learn in a safe, loving and patient environment.. Our teachers and para-professionals work hand-in-hand with therapists to create Individualized Education Plans (IEP) that help our students not only catch up academically but also learn to trust, overcome challenges, and build a foundation for a successful future.

A Family Atmosphere Built on Trust

The resounding theme you'll hear from staff when they talk about Murphy-Harpst Academy is that it's a "family." This isn't just a feel-good slogan; it's woven into the very fabric of the school. "We are a family, not individuals trying to outdo one another," one staff member shared. "We work together for the good of the whole family." This collaborative spirit creates a nurturing environment where students can finally let their guard down. As Scott Merritt, CEO of Murphy-Harpst, says, "Once the students realize they're in a safe environment, that's when they begin to excel."

This sense of safety is crucial, because, as another staff member put it, "Students feel the love and know we care about them as a person." This love is expressed through a therapeutic academic model that sets Murphy-Harpst Academy apart. Tonia Little, Murphy-Harpst Academy Principal, explains, "Our focus is to address the needs of the whole child." This means having resources like a Sensory Room, something most traditional schools don't have, where a student can go to regulate their emotions and process their triggers in a relaxing environment. Tonia also emphasizes the unique qualifications of the staff: "Our certified teachers and para-pros are not just educators; they are trained to work specifically with students who have come from backgrounds of trauma."

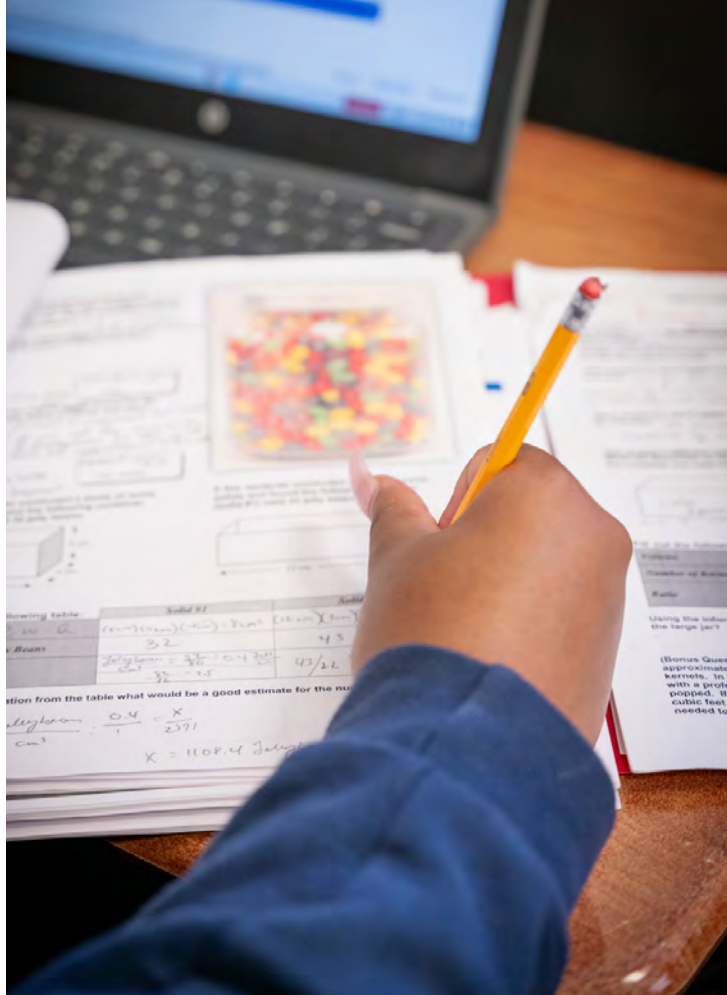


A Holistic Approach to Healing and Learning

The Academy seamlessly integrates with the rest of the Murphy-Harpst campus. Education is not a separate silo; it's part of a holistic ecosystem of care. The Murphy-Harpst Academy connects with residential life, spiritual care, and therapeutic activities to ensure that every aspect of a child's life is working in harmony to support their healing and growth.

This collaboration is a key advantage. Teachers provide daily reports to the cottages, and they work closely with cottage leaders and staff to address any challenges a child might be facing. If a student is acting out in school, the cottage staff and therapist is there to help them understand their choices and encourage them to make appropriate ones. This collaborative approach ensures that every adult in a child's life is on the same page, working together to help them succeed.

The campus itself becomes a classroom. The therapeutic recreational program and equine therapy can be woven into lesson plans, providing unique, hands-on learning experiences. It's this holistic, all-encompassing approach that helps students who have been failed by traditional systems to finally thrive.



Celebrating Success, One Child at a Time

Success at Murphy-Harpst Academy isn't always measured by test scores. It's measured in the small victories, the breakthroughs in trust, and the development of life skills. It's the story of a student named Billy, who, with the help of his teacher, was able to identify a trigger and used the Sensory Room to calm himself down. It's the story of a young man in the Transitional Living Program who, with the encouragement of the staff, overcame his fears about the future, graduated from Murphy-Harpst Academy, and is now in an Independent Living Program—a huge step towards a self-sufficient life. Scott Merritt also shared the story of another young man who, with the help of a Life Coach, not only got his diploma at Cedartown High School, but is now working a construction job on campus, saving up for college.

These stories are a testament to the transformative power of the Murphy-Harpst Academy model. As one student shared, "Really, it's helped me learn and get WAY better grades. I am taught, and I am learning."

Looking to the Future

Murphy-Harpst Academy has already transformed countless lives, but we're not stopping there. As effective as the Academy has been, we're currently limited by our space. Murphy-Harpst Academy is confined to a single hallway in the basement of our chapel, leading to constraints on classroom sizes and access to technology. That's why we have exciting plans for a new, expanded building, a space that will be more trauma-informed and therapeutic-friendly. This new building is not just about bricks and mortar; it's about creating an even more healing and effective environment for our students and staff.

As we look to the future, we are filled with hope. Hope for the students who will walk through our doors, and hope for the bright futures they will build for themselves. Murphy-Harpst Academy will continue to be a place where children who have known so much pain can find a family, a community, and a place to finally heal, learn, and thrive.

Engaging with Our Community



A Night at Coolray Field Supporting Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers

In celebration of Foster Care Awareness Month, Murphy-Harpst joined forces with the Gwinnett Stripers for a night of baseball with a purpose on May 30. A portion of every ticket purchased helped support our mission to provide healing and hope to vulnerable youth. Students proudly marched on the field with a banner, and the team highlighted our mission on the big screen. Our team also set up a table to share information with fans. We're grateful for everyone who came out to support us. These events are about more than fundraising, they build community and remind kids that people believe in them.



Scan to read more

PaintFest Brings Partners Together for Murphy-Harpst

Art has the power to transform, and this summer, our campus proved it. On July 11th, our recreation center became a vibrant studio for PaintFest, thanks to a special partnership with the Foundation for Hospital Art and volunteers from Bank of America. Over 40 youth and staff discovered the joy of creation together. The beautiful paintings will soon be hung on campus, turning our shared spaces into galleries of hope and imagination—a true reflection of the beauty our community creates.



Scan to read more



Celebrating Growth with New Evolve Homes

We're thrilled to announce the opening of two new Evolve homes in Augusta, bringing our total to six in the area. This is a significant step in our mission to provide innovative and therapeutic foster care for Georgia's children. These homes use a community approach, with two sets of dedicated foster parents providing a stable, family-style setting for four children. The Evolve Initiative offers in-home therapy, case management, and tutoring, helping children heal from trauma and build a foundation for a successful future.



Scan to watch video

Tributes

IN HONOR

Betty Archer
Jessie Bosley
Savannah Bosley
Phil Brewster
Carol Burns
Anna Carter
Carole Cole
Diana Dawson
William Dupre
Rev. Burch Fannin
Rev. Dr. Mable Foster
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Gladys Heath
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Millie Orr
Millie Orr
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Your 2024-2025 Impact



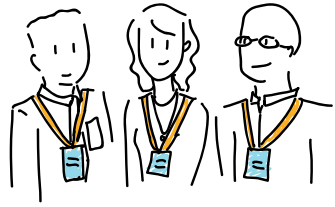
59

counties served



232 days

average length of stay



16

clinicians on staff



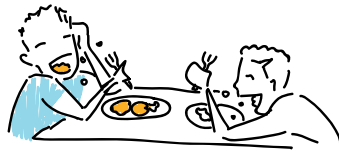
459

group therapy sessions



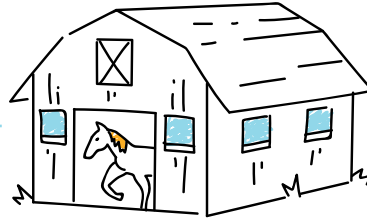
23

youth employed



110,182

meals served



50

Equine Therapy groups



5

GED/high school graduates



140

families served



12

sibling groups



56

children served through foster care



37

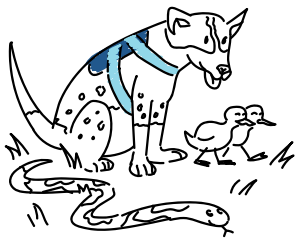
adoptions and reunifications





4,943

individual therapy sessions



22

animals assisting in therapy



273

children served



2,211,479

raised in fiscal year 2024-2025



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Murphy-Harpst Leads the Way as Georgia's First QRTP

We are proud to announce the official launch of our Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP) on our Cedartown campus—the first of its kind in Georgia. This groundbreaking initiative, made possible by the Family First Prevention Services Act, allows us to address the critical mental health needs of children who have faced extraordinary challenges.

Our QRTP is a residential program providing a higher level of care and meets stringent federal requirements for trauma-informed care and clinical services. It serves as a crucial step-down service for youth transitioning from inpatient psychiatric facilities, bridging the gap between intensive care and independent living.



Foster Care Spotlight Harlem's Next Steps

This fall, Harlem, one of our incredible foster care youth, began his journey at Kennesaw State University. Thanks to the support of our dedicated foster care team and a generous community partnership with Rockmart Walmart, he started the semester equipped with a new laptop and backpack, ready to take on this exciting new chapter.

Pictured right: The Rockmart Walmart team joined us on campus to deliver backpacks to residents, ensuring even more students had the support and supplies for a strong start to the semester.





Church Partners and Sponsors List

Top Company Giving

Breco Realty
B & B Building Services, Inc.
Huntington National Bank
Southwire Company
Plant Bowen - Citizens of Georgia Power
RSUI Group, Inc.
Walmart

Karen L. Davis Insurance Agency
Bianchi & Company, Inc.
Bellamy-Strickland Chevrolet, GMC, Buick, Isuzu
Fantasia Rug Company
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Murphy Holdings, Inc.
Sol Design, LLC

Top Foundation Giving

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Wilds L. Pierce Charitable Foundation
Community Foundation for the Central Savannah River Area
Clark and Ruby Baker Foundation
Thalia and Michael C. Carlos Foundation, Inc.
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Due West Global Methodist Church

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St. James (Atlanta) United Methodist Church
Redwood Church at St. John
Canton First Global Methodist Church
Athens First United Methodist Church
Apalachee United Methodist Church

Top Church Per Member Giving

Rome First United Methodist Church
Whitesburg United Methodist Church
Mt. Carmel (Newnan) United Methodist Church
Hiram First United Methodist Church
Atlanta First United Methodist Church
Community First United Methodist Church
Mt. Carmel (Norcross) United Methodist Church

St. James (Atlanta) United Methodist Church
North Decatur United Methodist Church
Northbrook United Methodist Church
Vann's Valley United Methodist Church
Northside United Methodist Church
Stripling Chapel United Methodist Church
Hoschton United Methodist Church

Please contact our Advancement team at advancement@murphyharpst.org or 828.387.0752 for more information.

Heroes for Hope

Heroes for Hope are individual donors who contribute \$1,000 or more in a fiscal year to Murphy-Harpst. Our Heroes for Hope provide a large percentage of all dollars raised each year and help make big dreams come true at Murphy-Harpst.

Founder's Circle: \$20,000+

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Scott Elder

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Murphy-Harpst

LIFE AND HOPE FOR CHILDREN

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

MURPHY-HARPST
100
Children's Centers



Support Murphy-Harpst
this Christmas



murphyharpst.org/christmas

Share the Joy of Christmas with Murphy-Harpst.

Many children in Murphy-Harpst's care experience a joyous Christmas morning for the very first time. You can help by purchasing gifts from their Amazon Wish List or by making a monetary donation. You can also host a festive on-campus activity, send Christmas cards, or help decorate. Another option is to sponsor a holiday outing to a festive event like Garden Lights, Holiday Nights at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. Finally, you can assist the staff with wrapping gifts in mid-December.



Be a part of Christmas joy
by scanning this QR code
to get involved.



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