



# CHAMBLISS CENTER FOR CHILDREN

GROWING YOUNG LIVES 24•7•365

VOLUME 36, NO. 1

SPRING 2024

## *In Loving Memory Of Philip A. Acord*

August 12, 1946 – February 26, 2024



“Mr. Phil” was a loyal boss, friend, mentor, and advocate for children who faithfully served Chambliss Center for Children and this community for 50 years. Retiring from his role as President/CEO in 2021, Phil remained close to the staff and mission of the organization. His untimely death leaves us with broken hearts but with further resolve to continue the work of the agency into the decades ahead.

TVA NUCLEAR – OUR PARTNER IN EDUCATION

# Volunteers & In-Kind Donations

We want to thank all of you for your continuous contributions and efforts in helping make Chambliss Center for Children the best place for children in our community. This list acknowledges those who donated time, talents, and services from **October 16, 2023 - February 1, 2024**. Thank you!

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## Join us for our - VIRTUAL - Foster Care Info Night

6.13.24 - 6PM

For questions or to  
get the Zoom link, email us at  
[fostercare@chamblisscenter.org](mailto:fostercare@chamblisscenter.org)  
or call 423-693-2580.



We were so grateful to **Elks Lodge 400** (below) for donating hats, gloves, scarves, and socks for the children at Chambliss Center for Children!



We'd like to thank **LuDaryl Lyons** and **Avery Smith** from the **Epsilon Xi Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity** for their generous Christmas donation to help the children and families at our agency!



We appreciate our friends at **BlueCare Operational Oversight** for stopping by to help prepare for Christmas at Chambliss Center for Children. These amazing volunteers helped clean up our halls, right before the holiday decor made its first appearance!



The weather was perfect for some painting with our friends at **Chambliss Law**. We appreciate their help with touching up some areas on campus!

We are only a few months away from the Annual Lemonade Stand Challenge, which will be held July 12-14. We are excited to continue this fundraiser to benefit the Isaiah 117 House at Chambliss Center for Children. Contact [hamiltontn@isaiah117house.com](mailto:hamiltontn@isaiah117house.com) to learn more!



Since opening its doors last October, the Isaiah 117 House at Chambliss Center for Children has lived up to its mission, helping the children of Hamilton County. Location Leader **John Hunter** welcomed two additional staff members, Care Coordinator **Karen Tazewell** and Support Coordinator **Jess Thornton**, to assist him in everyday operations. This dream team has continued to work tirelessly to ensure that children entering state custody have one of the best experiences possible on one of the most difficult days of their lives. We are truly grateful for the support we've received since opening our doors.



Our volunteers had a blast spreading the love across Hamilton County for the **Isaiah 117 House's Spread the Love campaign**. Many appreciated community members had their yards decorated with hearts for 24 hours. If you're interested in learning how you can spread the love next February, contact [hamiltontn@isaiah117house.com](mailto:hamiltontn@isaiah117house.com).



We're so thankful for this group of rock stars ensuring that the Isaiah 117 House at Chambliss Center for Children runs smoothly! Pictured from left to right are Support Coordinator **Jess Thornton**, Location Leader **John Hunter** and Care Coordinator **Karen Tazewell**.



We were honored to welcome **Governor Bill Lee** and **First Lady Maria Lee** into the Isaiah 117 House at Chambliss Center for Children for a tour in early February. Pictured from left to right are Support Coordinator **Jess Thornton**, **Dave McMahon**, **Michelle Smith**, Chambliss Center for Children President and CEO **Katie Harbison**, First Lady **Maria Lee**, Governor **Bill Lee**, **Jason E. Mumpower**, Location Leader **John Hunter**, **Robyn Logan**, and Chambliss Center for Children Executive Director of Residential Services **Liz Blasbery**.

## STAFF HOLIDAY CELEBRATION & SERVICE AWARDS



Early Head Start Teacher **Alexis Pruett** celebrates her 5 years of service with our agency, taking amazing care of our little ones in the nursery.

The annual Board and Staff Holiday Celebration was held on December 12th. Each year, our Board members host a celebration to distribute lunch and present service awards to our dedicated staff. This year, we celebrated **Brian Napier**, **Nikki Miller**, **Emily Barrow**, **Ja'Quisha Knowles**, **Nikita Stubblefield**, and **Alexis Pruett** for celebrating 5 years with the agency; **Sumer Arispe**, **Levasia Green**, and **Anita Morgan** for 10 years, and **Kim Hamill** for 20 years of service. We want to thank our Board and staff for their commitment to this agency and for all they do to improve the lives of children and families in our community!



Associate Director of Extended Early Childhood Education **Levasia Green** shares a hug with Board Chairman **Mark Hite** in celebration of her 10 years of service.



**Antonio, Bronx, Nakkia**, and **Brittynn** were thrilled to celebrate their teachers for all of their hard work this holiday season!



Financial Services Assistant **Kim Hamill** was awarded for her astonishing 20 years at Chambliss Center for Children!



# Financial Donations

This list of financial contributions is from **October 16, 2023 - February 1, 2024**. If we have omitted your name, please accept our apologies and let us know, so that we may acknowledge you in our summer newsletter. Thanks to each of you for helping us continue our mission of working with our community's families and children.

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Help us have an impact on future generations by including Chambliss Center for Children in your estate plans. To learn more about joining our planned giving circle, the 1872 Society, visit [chamblisscenter.org/plannedgiving](http://chamblisscenter.org/plannedgiving) or contact [Emily Barrow](mailto:embarrow@chamblisscenter.org) at 423.468.1139 or [embarrow@chamblisscenter.org](mailto:embarrow@chamblisscenter.org).

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Mr. Phil's Friends is a group of donors who join forces with us by giving a monthly donation to Chambliss Center for Children. This group of donors helps provide consistent funding to assist our organization in serving over 750 children per day. Members receive insider updates, are listed in our three annual newsletters, and receive a pair of limited-edition Mr. Phil socks. Yes, these socks are awesome!

Making a monthly gift as a part of Mr. Phil's Friends is easy, economical, and impactful! Become a member of this dedicated group by visiting [Chamblisscenter.org/mrphilfriends](http://Chamblisscenter.org/mrphilfriends). Make your monthly gift today!



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*continued on page 8*



# 12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MARDI GRAS Gala



Our 12th Annual Mardi Gras Gala was held on February 9th at **The Chattanooga Hotel!** Thanks to our sponsors, guests, and volunteers, we had a blast taking attendees on a stroll down the legendary streets of New Orleans.

Our magnificent VIP guests arrived prior to the event for an exclusive cocktail reception in the Big Easy Lounge sponsored by **Chambliss Law**. When our other guests arrived, their first stop was to grab some masks and beads courtesy of our masquerade sponsor **Warren & Griffin**. Once they had their Mardi Gras swag, attendees were able to visit two specialty bars, hosted by the **First Horizon Foundation**. Hurricanes and other festive libations in hand, thanks to our in-kind sponsor **Athens Distributing**, guests then had the opportunity to take a stroll down Bourbon Street, sponsored by **Double Cola** and pass through the French Market auction, sponsored by **EPB**. There were also custom necklaces and masks made by our children available to purchase on Canal Street, sponsored by **Title Guaranty & Trust**. Our amazing kids' craft table was sponsored by **TVA**, who returned as our Mission Sponsor.

Our party-goers stepped into the French Quarter sponsored by **The Mark Hite Team** for dancing and a full spread of Cajun-inspired fare thanks to Creole Sponsor **Unum**. The evening featured a parade led by Tony and Pinky Young, who were crowned as King and Queen shortly after. This was followed by a classic game of Heads or Tails. Dixieland jazz, an energetic dance party, and lots of New Orleans-style fun created the perfect Friday night out for our guests. Throughout the night, eager guests ventured out to draw their cork and claim their own bottle of wine at the Wine Pull sponsored by **Riverworks Marketing**. To commemorate the event, guests were invited to visit the **Commercial Air Solutions** photo booth with their krew.

At the end of the night, all attendees were offered complimentary Uber rides, courtesy of our Safe Ride Sponsor, **Best & Brock**. Because of the support of our 2024 Mardi Gras Gala, a record of nearly \$132,000 was raised to benefit Chambliss Center for Children's programs!



This was the first year that we introduced the Wine Pull sponsored by **Riverworks Marketing**. Attendees had the chance to grab a cork for one of the many bottles of wine that were graciously donated for this event.



At this year's event, we started the evening off with our highly anticipated Mardi Gras Parade, led by our King and Queen, members of the **Dixieland Jazz Band**, and our festive guests!

The crowning of our Mardi Gras Gala King and Queen is one of our most cherished traditions. We're so thankful that last year's Queen **Caroline**

**Walker** and current Board Chairman **Greg Cullum** could join us in crowning this year's King and Queen **Tony and Pinky Young!**



In remembrance of our friend and forever Mardi Gras King **Mark Hite**, we set up a memorial in his honor where guests could view a slideshow of special photos of our friend. Those who made a donation to our organization received one of Mark's favorite lapel pins.



President & CEO **Katie Harbison** (left) and **Jan Tiano** (right)

We're glad our friends at **Unum** could not only join us for a fun-filled night, but also sponsor our delicious Creole buffet! Pictured from left to right are **Ken Jones, Tiffany Coleman, Yvette Stewart, Kimberly Bowen, and Holly Haynes**.



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# Remembering Mark Hite

JULY 31, 1965 – JANUARY 1, 2024

Mark W. Hite joined the Board of Directors of Chambliss Center for Children in 2016 after many years of involvement as a volunteer and donor. He was Chairman of the Board of Directors in 2023 and would have held that position again in 2024 had it not been for his untimely passing. Mark was a passionate, caring, and energetic cheerleader for our mission and our staff. His dedication to our Board of Directors and generosity towards our agency were contagious. His death leaves countless holes in the many committees and projects in which he was involved, as well as in the hearts of those who worked alongside him.

*"Mark was a remarkable human, who meant so much to everyone at Chambliss and to me personally. I had the privilege of working closely alongside Mark for the past eight years on Chambliss' board. I had the utmost respect for him as a colleague, and grew to love Mark as a dear friend. He was kind, thoughtful, and intentional. His energy and enthusiasm was contagious. And, he adored this agency and all of the people associated with it. Mark's beautiful legacy of generosity will live on in all of us as we continue his work in service to others. Bless his soul. What a good and faithful servant."* - **Julie Stowe**, Board Member

*"I was always grateful for Mark's authenticity. Even though we didn't know each other long, he would randomly text me things like "thank you for your support" or "I appreciate you so much." Only intentional souls who truly care about the wellbeing of others take time to engage with people in that way. Mark was one of a kind, and he will be missed."* - **Kimberly A. Bowen**, Board Member



## Around the Center

We joined the **Imagination Library** and **Signal Centers** for Reading 9 to 5: A Dolly Parton Celebration on January 19th. Dressed in amazing Dolly attire, classroom teachers and special guests read books to the children in our agency from 9AM-5PM. We had a blast participating in this day of reading, not only to celebrate Dolly's birthday, but also in support of her efforts to provide books to the children in our community.



**Giving Tuesday** is a world-wide day of philanthropy, recognized each year on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. On that day, joined by some of our young explorers, we shared riddles about our agency, read by some friends in our community on social media through videos. Together, we raised over \$13,000 to help support the mission of Chambliss Center for Children. Thank you to all who contributed, and we want to give a big shout out to our friends at **LYNC Logistics** who matched the first \$6,000 raised that day!



Chattanooga Police Sergeant and Foster Dad **Victor Miller** met with Executive Director of Residential Services **Liz Blasberry** to provide a donation from **The Fraternal Order of Police** to help purchase holiday gifts for children and youth in our Foster Care Program. We are so grateful for their continued support!



We recently presented **Mrs. Martha Drake** with a gift of thanks from our Pre-K children for the care she provided to children in 1960 when a fire broke out at The Children's Home (our former name).

Mrs. Drake's husband, Eugene, rushed to The Children's Home the evening of the fire to help keep record of where all the children were being placed. The Drakes themselves took in two little girls, who Mrs. Drake said fit right in to their family. The girls spent several weeks that summer playing with the Drake's daughters and other children in the Shephard Hills neighborhood before returning to The Children's Home once clean-up and restoration of the building was completed. Mrs. Drake is pictured here with her daughter **Marilyn Wyeth**.



The halls of our main campus were jolly and bright thanks to **The Signal Mountain Garden Club!** Each year, these hard-working volunteers, led

by Board member **Cindy Wilkerson**, transform our campus into a winter wonderland filled with so much cheer!



continued from page 8

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## Ten Years Later With Katrina Gilbert

As some may recall, Katrina's story of triumph and resilience was made public after the Chattanooga-based documentary, "Paycheck to Paycheck: The Life and Times of Katrina Gilbert," aired on HBO in March 2014. This year marks the documentary's 10-year anniversary, and we couldn't be happier to share where Katrina Gilbert is today. After Katrina's story aired on HBO, she became a quick celebrity, speaking at large conferences and making appearances on TV shows around the country. She met Maria Shriver, Oprah Winfrey, Anderson Cooper, and many other well-known figures. After about two years of traveling and speaking, she returned to her job as a CNA at the same nursing home. She married her boyfriend Chris in 2015 who was seen in the documentary. They were able to save up to purchase a home in 2019, where they still live with their children. Katrina was also able to move jobs to work in a local hospital where she has increased her skills, responsibilities, and her pay! Katrina's ex-husband has gotten clean, holds down a steady job, and is very supportive of Katrina and extremely involved in the lives of their children. She is so happy that the documentary was made as it was a help to her but also to so many people who saw it. We remain in contact with Katrina and her family and hope that all of our families can grow into the success story that she is! Pictured here from left to right are Brooklyn (18), Trent (14), Lydia (16) and Katrina.

# Celebrating The Season



We were thrilled to welcome Santa Claus back to campus for a special meet-n-greet with our kiddos. Little **Jur'nee** couldn't be happier to pose with her new best friend!



The young adults in our Transitional Living Program enjoyed a month of holiday activities, such as hiking at Rock City, visiting the Chattanooga Zoo, ice skating, and more. None of this would be possible without support from the **Stan Lanzo Christmas Fund**. If

you're interested in helping make Christmas special for these young people, you can give to the Stan Lanzo Christmas Fund hosted at the **Chattanooga Bar Association**. Call **Lee Davis** at 423-266-0605 to learn more!



We'd like to thank **Unum** for hosting a Winter Celebration back in December for our toddlers! They had a great time painting ornaments, drawing paper reindeers, and building snowmen. Thanks again, Unum!



## WELCOME NEW STAFF!



We are thrilled to welcome some fresh faces to the Chambliss Center for Children family. **Karen Wilson** joined us as our Human Resources Manager. She will be working diligently to help staff our agency. **Jimmy Lail** joined us as our Facilities Manager. He will work closely with our Maintenance Team to keep all our facilities running smoothly!



The holidays are always fun and exciting on campus thanks to the local schools, associations and individuals that come to our agency to help us celebrate with our kiddos. **Collegedale Academy** hosted their 40th Christmas Bash for the children and families in our center. The school's band performed cheerful Christmas tunes, followed by a special exhibition from the gymnastics team. The children in attendance had the opportunity to learn stunts, flips and more. Families were able to take home stockings filled with toys and delicious treats. Thanks again, Collegedale Academy!





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## Hello Spring!

It's time for Spring cleaning!  
Whether you want some cool items to  
redesign your space or need to say goodbye to a few things that have overstayed their  
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