



DECEMBER 2023

# WHAT A YEAR IT WAS

*A very festive edition of the HHA Community Partners Newsletter*

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## REFLECTIONS: WINDING DOWN THE YEAR

**WRITTEN BY COURTNEY BRAGGS**

A hallmark of the wonderful holiday season, celebrated by many, is the ending of one year and the beginning of the next. The changing year unites us all and gives us the opportunity to wish each other a happy new year full of opportunity and promise. Anticipating the fresh start and clean slate that each new year brings makes it easy to feel excited about bringing forth your best intentions to work hard towards your goals. While pondering on what our future potentially holds, it's important to reflect on all of the experiences (pleasant & unpleasant) that have shaped us into the person's that we are today. Making time to absorb the opportunities and lessons from the past year can help us learn what to do (or *not* do) to achieve our future successes. Change is life's only constant, and our ability to adapt to life's changes will determine our success in life.

As the hustle and bustle continues, don't forget to dedicate some time for yourself for some much-needed reflection and intention setting. What are you grateful for & who were your major supporters this year? During this time of the year, more than ever, our thoughts turn gratefully to those who have made our progress possible; and, in this spirit we recap our year and sincerely say Thank You, Best Wishes, and Happy New Year! We hope you feel more grounded, aware, supported, and purposeful as you welcome 2024!

## Community Highlights

### The Future of the Butler Terrace Community



The Mill Creek neighborhood has long struggled with a high concentration of poverty and disinvestment but is well-poised to benefit from exciting new assets and the City of Huntsville's strong economy. For decades, the Mill Creek neighborhood's physical landscape has been dominated by five public housing sites that were confined to this area. Over time, a lack of typical private-sector housing and commercial investment limited opportunities and gave way to high rates of vacancy and crime. Meanwhile, the neighborhood had been largely disconnected from the City of Huntsville's thriving economy, much of which is based on the U.S. defense industry and the City's early prominent role in the U.S. space program.

With the award of a \$1,300,000 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant the Mill Creek community seeks to build upon the assets of the neighborhood and bridge the divide between Mill Creek and the broader city. The neighborhood stands to benefit from being a part of a city that hosts the second largest technology and research park in the nation. Mill Creek is located just west of downtown Huntsville, making it proximate to retail, governmental centers, and health care facilities. Critically, the neighborhood is also home to the nation's largest privately-owned arts facility, the Lowe Mill Arts and Entertainment complex, which is located in a former textile mill. With the opening of Lowe Mill in 2004, the area has increasingly become known as a destination for arts, entertainment and cultural events. In addition, the neighborhood is located in a recently designated Opportunity Zone, opening opportunities for future investment.

The City and Huntsville Housing Authority (HHA) will lead the effort to build on this momentum, developing a robust, community-based Transformation Plan. Along with a variety of critical community organizations and residents, key partners include the largest current private-sector housing investor (Invent), a leading nonprofit housing developer (Neighborhood Concepts), a historical university and anchor (Alabama A & M University), Arts Huntsville, and the First Baptist Church of Huntsville. Rather than wait on traditional development interest to shape the community, this team will take the initiative to engage a variety of leading mixed-income housing partners. By leveraging these relationships and resources with the Choice Neighborhoods Planning and Action Grant, the City and HHA will secure the required financial backing, community organizing expertise, and equitable vision to build a model mixed-income, mixed-use community. Read more at [hsvha.org](https://hsvha.org)

## Celebrating Kwanzaa (12/26-1/1)

Seven Principles, honoring African culture & traditions

### Umoja (Unity)

To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

### Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)

To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

### Ujima (Collective Work & Responsibility)

To build and maintain our community together and make our community's problems our problems and to solve them together.

### Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)

To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together.

### Nia (Purpose)

To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

### Kuumba (Creativity)

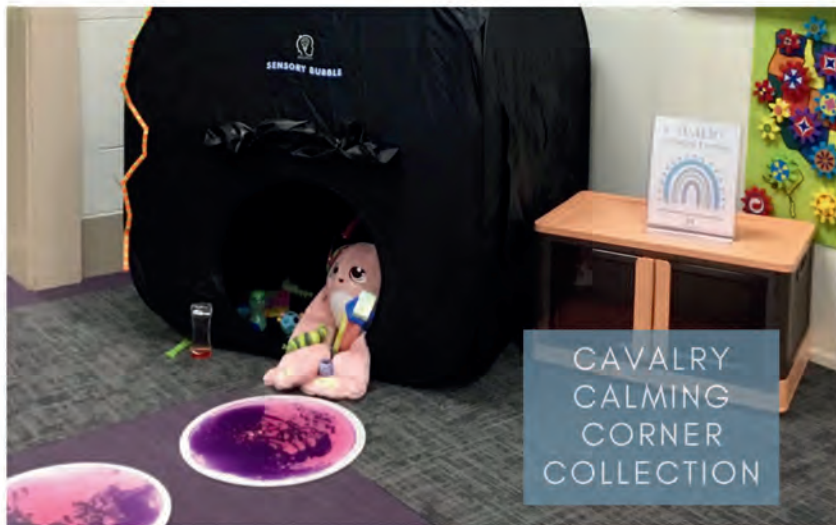
To do always as much as we can to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

### Imani (Faith)

To believe with all our hearts in our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)





Thanks to funds awarded from the Huntsville-Madison County Library Foundation, the Cavalry Hill Public Library now supports neurodiversity with its "Cavalry Calming Corners" collection of toys, games, learning tools, comfort objects, & fidgeting aids. This addition to the library provides users with multi-sensory stimulation to further engage themselves while retreating and self-regulating at a calming corner, participating during sensory storytime, or exploring at the sensory stations.



HMCPL introduces **Ready, Set, Kindergarten**, a 10 week program that aims to help your 3-5 year old in exploring and practicing the skills needed to ensure a smooth transition into Kindergarten. Available at all 10 library locations, this program led by HMCPL staff and is completely free for participants. See our events calendar to learn when your nearest library location is offering **Ready, Set, Kindergarten** and check out a school readiness kit while you're there!



Highlighting the donations we received this year from generous sponsors! We also received countless items to benefit our clients. It is thanks to the support of the community that we are able to keep "A Ray of Hope" alive!

ASHAKIRAN HUNTSVILLE

Thank you!  
To Bridgeworth Wealth Management for the generous donation!



# SPOTLIGHTING SUCCESS



**Health Establishments at Local Schools (HEALS),** Inc., a leading nonprofit school-based healthcare organization, is delighted to partner with the Huntsville Housing Authority (HHA), dedicated to fostering community health and well-being. This collaborative effort will bring essential medical, dental and optometry services directly to resident children of HHA.

We held several screening events during fall break and provided: sports physicals, immunizations, and general health screenings, including height, weight, eyes, hearing, and blood pressure measurements at Northwoods (Cavalry Hill Center) and Butler Terrace/L.R. Patton communities.

These events mark a significant milestone in the efforts to improve the health and well-being of the pediatric populations within the Huntsville community.

HEALS, Inc. and HHA share a common goal of ensuring that all children have access to quality healthcare, regardless of their economic circumstances. The children are also able to receive services at any of the HEALS locations throughout Madison County, not just during an onsite event.

Throughout the year, HEALS will continue to bring the mobile unit to the HHA communities at spring and summer breaks to provide sports physicals, immunizations, and general health screenings, including height, weight, eyes, hearing, and blood pressure measurements. HEALS, Inc. and the Huntsville Housing Authority are excited about the positive impact this partnership will have on the health and future of our community's children. Together, we are making healthcare more accessible and supporting the well-being of the next generation - we are part of the solution!

*"The holiday season is a perfect time to reflect on our blessing and seek out ways to make life better for those around us." - Terri Marshall*



# VILLAGE OF PROMISE NAMED AS 2023 NONPROFIT OF THE YEAR

**ANNOUNCEMENT MADE AT THE HUNTSVILLE/MADISON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 38TH ANNUAL SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS GALA**

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (Oct. 3, 2023) — **Village of Promise (VoP)** was recently honored by being named the 2023 Nonprofit of the Year at the Huntsville/Madison County Chamber of Commerce (HMCCC) 38th Annual Small Business Awards Gala. The gala was held on the evening of Sept. 28, 2023 and honored small businesses and individuals in 15 award categories. VoP was one of 18 contenders in the Nonprofit of the Year category.

Empowering families to break the cycle of poverty, Village of Promise uses a targeted, multigenerational approach that provides age-based and need-related programming so families can conquer challenges, achieve dreams, and contribute to their community. VoP is a Family Advancement Center addressing the needs of children and families in distressed, high-poverty neighborhoods.

“We congratulate our fellow contenders in the Nonprofit of the Year category for the hard work done by all to make Huntsville and Madison County a better place to live.

The Village of Promise is humbled and honored to be recognized for our work in the Northwoods community,” said VoP CEO Dana M. Gillis. “Thanks to our many partners who walk this journey with us – together, we will continue on our quest to transform lives, one family at a time.”



## VILLAGE OF PROMISE ANNOUNCES SPEAKER SERIES

**FEATURING LELAND MELVIN, RETIRED NASA ASTRONAUT & FORMER NFL PLAYER**

**HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (April 24, 2023)** — Local nonprofit organization Village of Promise (VoP) announces their upcoming Speaker Series event with special guest former NASA astronaut and NFL player Leland Melvin on May 16, 2023. This year’s event, presented by Axient Corporation, marks VoP’s sixth Speaker Series event since 2011 and ties directly to the nonprofit’s mission to advance families out of poverty using a multi-generational approach.

*“One kind word can warm three winter months.” - Japanese Proverb*

In June 2023, VoP relaunched its CDF Freedom School program in the Northwoods community where they provided a fun & free summer camp experience for 50 children in the rising 1st-8th grades.



**LOOKING FORWARD TO  
*EVEN BIGGER,  
BRIGHTER, & BETTER  
THINGS*  
IN THE NEW YEAR.**

**Connect With the Partners**

ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - AAMU  
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FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER OF ALABAMA  
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HEALTH ESTABLISHMENTS AT LOCAL SCHOOLS (HEALS, INC.)  
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HELP ME GROW ALABAMA  
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HMCPL-CAVALRY HILL BRANCH LIBRARY  
Courtney Braggs, Manager/Librarian  
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HUNTSVILLE CITY SCHOOLS DISTRICT  
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YMCA Downtown Early Childhood Education Center  
Erin Ledet  
256-536-8131 | [erin.ledet@ymcahuntsville.org](mailto:erin.ledet@ymcahuntsville.org)

**UPCOMING  
EVENTS:**

Give Back Huntsville  
feat. Village of Promise  
1/4/24 | 12-1 PM

Enjoy lunch & learn about area  
non-profits in this monthly  
series at the Downtown  
Huntsville Public Library.

Operation Christmas  
Cleanup  
1/6/24 | 8 am - 1 pm

Green Team & community  
partners host at two locations:  
**John Hunt Park (2315 Airport  
Road) & Madison City Schools  
Stadium (211 Celtic Drive,  
Madison).** Dispose of live trees,  
flattened cardboard, batteries  
& old electronics in an  
environmentally friendly way.