

# Impact Report 2025-2026



# Creating Opportunities Through Education



# Words From Our Executive Director

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Dear Better Basics partners and friends,

At Better Basics, we believe education creates opportunity, and this year, we saw that belief in action.

More than 42,000 children in Central Alabama were impacted through Better Basics programs and partnerships, while our certified teachers provided more than 44,000 intervention sessions to strengthen foundational academic skills. We also helped put more than 227,000 high-interest, age-appropriate books directly into the hands of children.

This was a year of growth and new beginnings. We launched a new afterschool program at i3 Academy, expanding our reach and creating new opportunities for students. We also moved into a new office, giving our team a welcoming, collaborative space to grow alongside our organization.

As Alabama's largest Local Program Partner for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, we helped provide free monthly books to more than 15,000 children in Jefferson and Walker Counties. While we mourn Dolly's passing, we are grateful to help carry forward a legacy that will continue opening books, inspiring imaginations, and creating opportunities for generations of children to come.

Behind every number is a child: a student who grew more confident as a reader, a child who found a book they loved, or a kindergartner who entered school more prepared to learn. These moments drive our work.

Thank you to everyone who makes this work possible. Because of you, more children have the foundational skills and support they need to succeed.

Together, we are creating opportunities through education.

With gratitude,



**Catherine Goudreau**

Executive Director



# Our Impact

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**42,705**

total children  
served



**227,223**

children's books  
distributed



**46,298**

intervention  
sessions delivered



**68**

part-time certified  
teachers



**739**

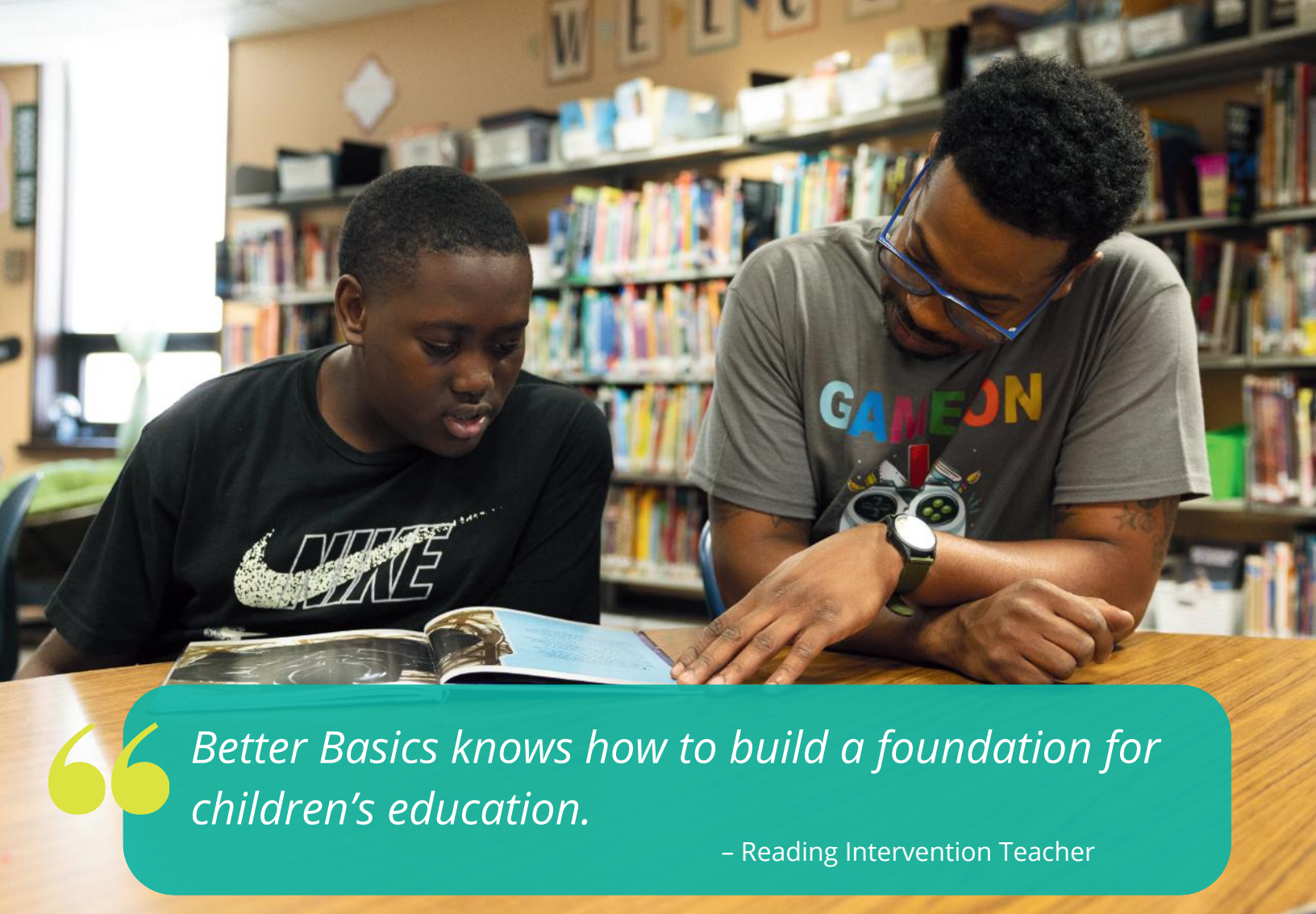
volunteers



“

*My Better Basics  
teacher taught  
me to believe in  
myself. Now I  
can improve in  
school.*

– 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Student



*Better Basics knows how to build a foundation for children's education.*

– Reading Intervention Teacher

## *The need is clear. The opportunity is, too.*

Every child deserves the opportunity to build a strong educational foundation, yet many children do not have consistent access to the support and resources that make it possible. Better Basics meets children where they are and creates opportunities for where they can go.

Better Basics works alongside schools and childcare centers to provide academic support during the school day, while afterschool and summer programs give children additional opportunities to learn, practice, and grow.

Across Better Basics' programs, children receive support from certified teachers, access to books, and meaningful educational experiences designed to strengthen the skills they need for what comes next.

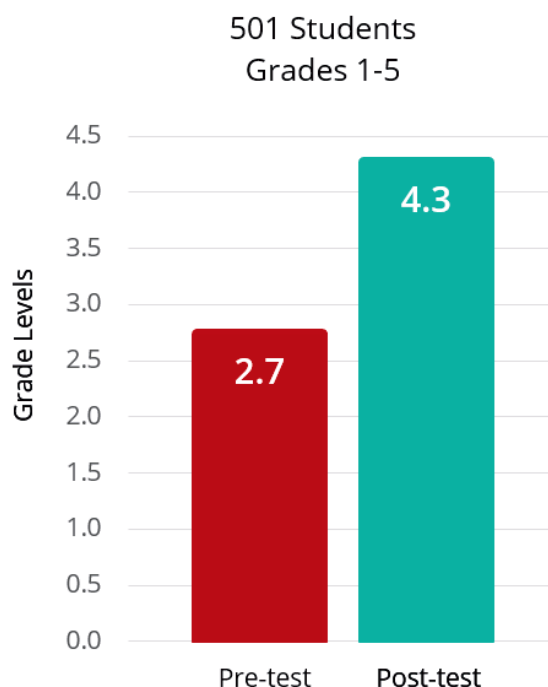
Our Intervention programs do more than help children make progress in the moment. They build the academic foundation future learning depends on. Each skill mastered creates a stronger starting point for what comes next, helping children move forward in school with the skills they need to keep learning.

# Program Highlights

## Reading Intervention

Reading Intervention provides small-group instruction in foundational literacy skills aligned with Alabama State Department of Education Academic Standards. Students meet with certified teachers three times per week for 20 weeks on-site during the school day, receiving research-based instruction. Each Reading Intervention student is gifted 20 books to extend learning beyond the classroom.

Last year's cohort of students grew an average of 1 year and 6 months in reading skills during the 20-week program.





*When we do math and I get it right, I feel proud.*

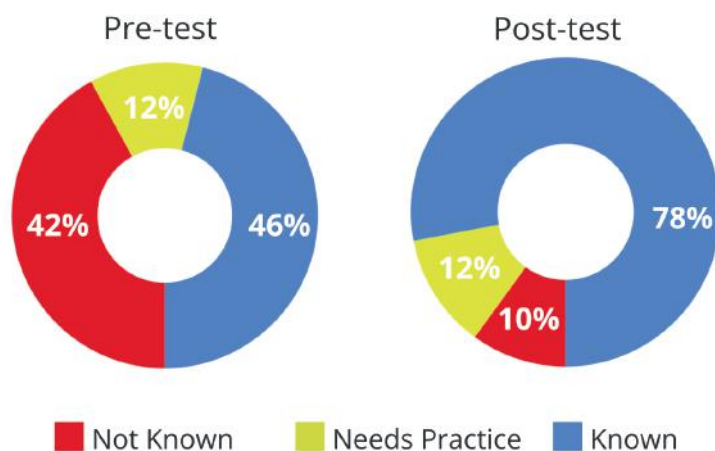
– 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Student

## Math Intervention

Math Intervention provides small-group instruction in core math concepts aligned with Alabama State Department of Education Academic Standards. Students meet with certified teachers three times per week for 20 weeks on-site during the school day, receiving research-based instruction. Each Math Intervention student is gifted 20 books to extend learning beyond the classroom.

Last year's cohort of students increased mastery of critical math skills by 70%.

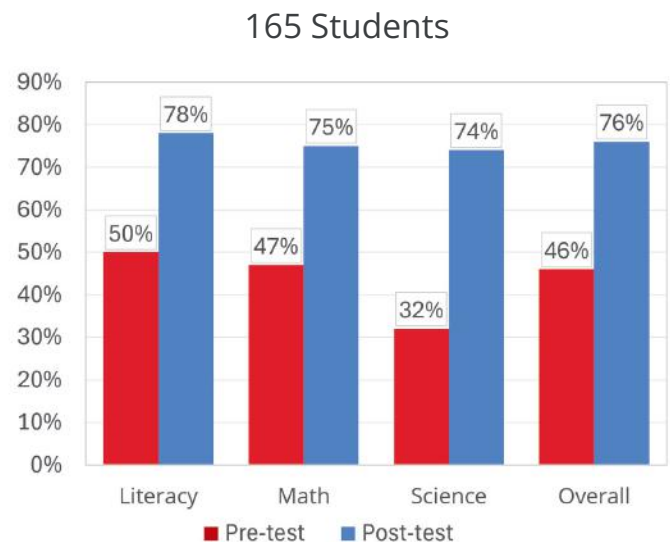
206 Students  
Grades 1-4



# Ready to Rise

Ready to Rise prepares rising kindergarteners for school success through engaging, hands-on lessons that build foundational early literacy, science, and math skills. Better Basics' certified teachers deliver lessons aligned with Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development (ASELD) for 12 weeks at partner childcare centers at no cost to families or centers. Each Ready to Rise student is gifted 12 books to extend learning beyond the classroom.

In Spring 2026, students in Ready to Rise showed a 65% increase in overall kindergarten readiness.



# Better Basics Reads

Better Basics Reads is a synchronized read-aloud event held each May. Volunteers read carefully selected books for each grade level (Pre-K through fifth grade) and each student is gifted a copy to take home. The event celebrates literacy, strengthens community partnerships, and puts books directly into the hands of thousands of children.

In 2026, 669 volunteers with Better Basics Reads reached 14,350 students across 41 partner schools and 7 school systems.



# Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library mails free, high-quality books to children from birth to age five, regardless of their family's income. Nonprofits serve as Local Program Partners, making free books available to children in communities around the world.

Better Basics is Alabama's largest Local Program Partner, funding and administering the program in Jefferson and Walker Counties and helping families enroll their children to receive books each month. We began serving Jefferson County in 2014 and expanded to Walker County in 2022.

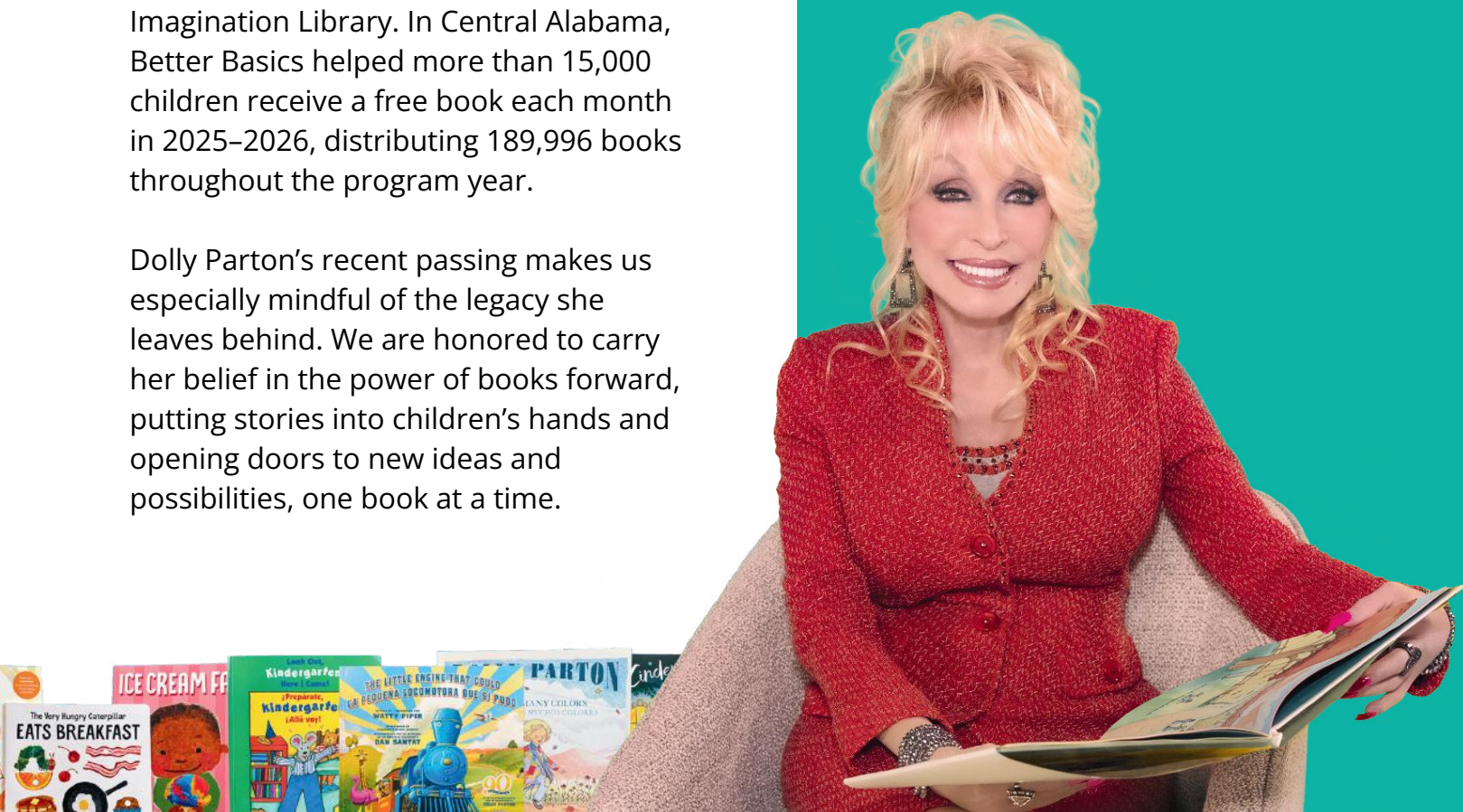
Worldwide, more than 325 million books have been gifted through the Imagination Library. In Central Alabama, Better Basics helped more than 15,000 children receive a free book each month in 2025-2026, distributing 189,996 books throughout the program year.

Dolly Parton's recent passing makes us especially mindful of the legacy she leaves behind. We are honored to carry her belief in the power of books forward, putting stories into children's hands and opening doors to new ideas and possibilities, one book at a time.

“

YOU CAN NEVER  
GET ENOUGH  
**BOOKS**  
INTO THE HANDS  
OF ENOUGH  
**CHILDREN**

*Dolly*



“

*Teachers are hope in human form, and Better Basics is hope made visible in the lives of children across Alabama.*

– Dr. Autumm M. Jeter  
Assistant Superintendent,  
Alabama State Dept. of  
Education

## Our Teachers

When students struggle with foundational academic skills, the right support can make a lasting difference. That is why Better Basics provides focused intervention designed to meet students where they are and help them move forward.

At the heart of our intervention programs are experienced, certified teachers. Reading Intervention, Math Intervention, and Ready to Rise are led by educators who understand how children learn and how to identify the areas where additional support is needed. Using research-based instruction aligned with Alabama's academic standards, our teachers provide focused instruction that helps students build both skills and confidence.

Year after year, students in our intervention programs make measurable progress. Those consistent results reflect the expertise, experience, and commitment our teachers bring to the classroom and give students a stronger foundation for the learning that comes next.



# Community Partners

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|                                             |                                          |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| ABC 33/40 TV                                | Jefferson County Housing Authority       |
| Adah International                          | Jefferson State Community College        |
| AKA Sorority, Inc. (Phi Iota Omega Chapter) | Junior League of Birmingham              |
| Alabama Power                               | KPMG LLP                                 |
| The Altamont School                         | Learning Excellence Through Tennis       |
| American Pipe & Supply                      | The Literacy Council                     |
| AmFirst                                     | Milo's Tea                               |
| Birmingham Bar Association                  | O'Neal Industries                        |
| Birmingham Mountain Radio                   | Regions Bank                             |
| Birmingham Promise                          | Ross Bridge Church                       |
| Birmingham Retired Educators Association    | Rotary Club of Birmingham                |
| Birthwell Partners                          | Samford University                       |
| The BJCC                                    | Sleep in Heavenly Peace                  |
| Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama           | Owens Modern Manufacturing               |
| Books-A-Million                             | Spire Energy                             |
| Bundles of Hope                             | Southern Company                         |
| City of Birmingham - Parks & Recreation     | St. Clair County Literacy Council        |
| DAR - Lilies of the Cahaba Chapter          | StoneRiver Company                       |
| Delta Inc. - Delta Sigma Theta Sorority     | Tacala Companies                         |
| Dolly Parton's Imagination Library          | UAB School of Medicine                   |
| Drummond Company                            | UAB - Serve 205                          |
| Grace Klein Community                       | Vestavia Hills High School Literacy Club |
| Habitat for Humanity                        | VIVA Health                              |
| Housing Authority of Birmingham District    | WBHM Radio                               |
| Jefferson County Family Resource Center     | WVTM-TV 13                               |

# School District Partners

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|                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bessemer City Schools   | Legacy Prep              |
| Birmingham City Schools | Restoration Academy      |
| Dallas County Schools   | Talladega County Schools |
| Fairfield City Schools  | Tarrant City Schools     |
| i3 Academy              |                          |

# Board of Directors 2026-2027

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**Chase Wright**

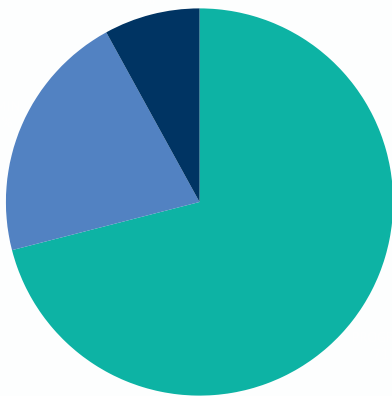
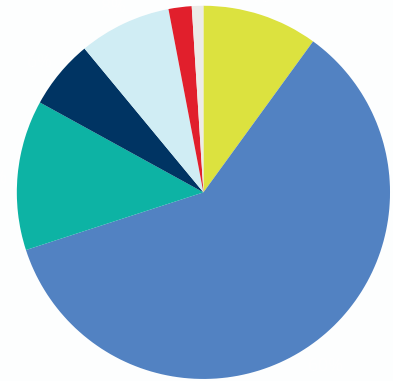
Spire Energy

# Finances

## Income

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| Government    | 60% |
| Grants        | 13% |
| Program Fees  | 10% |
| Contributions | 8%  |
| United Way    | 6%  |
| Events        | 2%  |
| Non-Cash      | 1%  |

**Total** **\$3,203,588**



## Expenses

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| Programming    | 71% |
| Administrative | 21% |
| Fundraising    | 8%  |

**Total** **\$2,794,146**

In 2026, Better Basics earned a four-star rating from Charity Navigator, the highest rating a charity can receive. This distinction reflects our commitment to strong financial health, transparency, and accountability.



We are also proud to hold the 2026 Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency, the highest level of recognition Candid awards. This distinction ensures our donors and partners can give with confidence.



# Funding Partners

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## \$10,000+

|                                            |                                                |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Alabama Department of Education            | Hugh Kaul Foundation                           |
| Alabama Power Foundation                   | Kinder Morgan Foundation                       |
| AmFirst                                    | Robert R. Meyer Foundation                     |
| ASH Renovations                            | Protective Life Foundation                     |
| Books-A-Million                            | Kyle Raburn                                    |
| Katie Burnett                              | Regions Foundation                             |
| Charles & Estelle Campbell Foundation      | Sanders Family Foundation                      |
| Caring Foundation of BCBS of AL            | Lawrence Sanders Foundation                    |
| Comer Foundation                           | Solar Quest Foundation, Inc.                   |
| Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham | Southeastern Grocers Foundation                |
| Wiley Cooper IV Family                     | JT Stephens Foundation                         |
| Daniel Foundation of Alabama               | United Way of Central Alabama                  |
| Diversified Energy                         | Vulcan Materials Foundation                    |
| EBSCO Foundation                           | Walker Area Community Foundation               |
| Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation         | Susan Mott Webb Charitable Trust               |
| Hill Crest Foundation                      | H Evan & Margaret Shook Zeiger Charitable Fund |
| Honda USA Foundation                       |                                                |

## \$5,000 - \$9,999

|                                            |                                 |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ALDI                                       | Pinnacle Financial              |
| Altec, Inc.                                | Rx Benefits                     |
| Birmingham Kiwanis Foundation              | Southeastern Grocers Foundation |
| Drummond Company                           | Spire Foundation                |
| Independent Presbyterian Church Foundation | Steiner Foundation              |
| Jefferson County Community Service Fund    | Synovus Bank                    |
| James Lewis Education & Tennis Foundation  | Tacala Companies                |
| Mission LLC                                | Target Circle Giving            |
| O'Neal Industries                          | US Steel                        |
| O'Neal Manufacturing Services              | VIVA Health                     |
|                                            | Ted & Dawn Walton               |

## \$1,000 - \$4,999

Alabama Credit Union  
Alina Arbuthnot  
Rick & Mary Jane Arendale  
AT&T Foundation  
Balch & Bingham  
Be Cheerful Fund  
Casey Bartok Family  
Lee Benton  
BMSS Advisors & CPAs  
Bradley  
Brasfield & Gorrie  
Bryant Bank  
CAC Group  
Carolina Handling  
Shannon Champion  
First Horizon Bank  
Founders Advisors  
Jim & Marilyn Henry  
Lee Ann & Melvin H Jacobs Foundation  
Walker Johnson  
Junior League of Birmingham  
Kendra Scott Company  
KPMG LLP  
Lightfoot, Franklin & White, LLC

Matthews Family Foundation  
Medical Properties Trust  
MeridianLink Inc.  
Milo's Tea  
Nick's Kids Foundation  
Oakworth Capital Bank  
ProAssurance  
Protective Employee Matching Fund  
Publix Charities  
Regions Employee Matching Fund  
RiverBank  
Dr. Robert & Judy Rutstein  
Amanda Saint  
Joseph Sandner IV  
Chris Seaman  
ServisFirst Bank  
Sexton Family Charitable Fund  
SouthState Bank  
Southern Power  
The Speaker Group  
Stonegate Investment Group  
StoneRiver Company  
StoneX  
Tenet Partners





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