

// 2019



GEORGIA
CENTER for OPPORTUNITY



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2019
**ANNUAL
REPORT**



// PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Our work at GCO is centered around what one might call the defining American idea: that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve a better life – to flourish – regardless of the circumstances of one's birth.

Even in this increasingly contentious age, it's an idea upon which most Americans can agree.

There's another idea that elicits widespread agreement that transcends partisanship – it's that the most important things that happen in an individual's life occur locally, in our homes and neighborhoods. It's there that we first learn to love, trust, live in community, and sacrifice for others, starting with our own families and extending to our neighbors.

This focus on local solutions has been central to our efforts in 2019.

Along those lines, I'm happy to report that our community-focused work has made significant strides this year and seen significant growth:

- Our Hiring Well, Doing Good initiative is expanding across Georgia and being seen across the country as a model for developing local pathways to employment.
- Thousands more children have access to schools in their communities that suit them best.
- Families are being renewed through our Healthy Families Initiative.

As we enter what is sure to be a contentious election year, it's important to remember that these are issues that transcend politics and election results. They are issues rooted in timeless principles. Thank you for being a crucial part of making these principles come alive for people all across Georgia.

In the pages of this report, I hope you'll find inspiration as you read more about the work and impact you make possible through your generous partnership, prayers, and participation.

Randy Hicks
President & Chief Executive Officer

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// IN BRIEF

Thanks to our partners, we've experienced tremendous growth this year and set ourselves up as state and national leaders on anti-poverty solutions. We brought on new staff. We began honing our focus on the Success Sequence. We launched our first Breakthrough event. And so much more.

// BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gerald Thames, Board Chairman

Director of the Thames Family Foundation

Keith Schneider, Vice Chairman

President and CEO, GPS Trackit

Randy Hicks, GCO CEO & President

Elder, Perimeter Church; Board of Directors, Segue Ministries

Karin Douglas, Secretary

VP of Development, Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power & Potential

Shaunti Feldhahn

Author and Speaker

Tony Kitchens

Reintegration Services Professional

Tim Bentsen

Director, Synovus Financial Corp.

Christina Coors Williams

Trustee, Adolph Coors Foundation

*The information presented in this report, including our financial update, is drawn from Georgia Center for Opportunity's 2019 fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2019. While GCO's finances are audited annually, the financial information included in this report is unaudited due to the audit being completed after our publication date. GCO receives Charity Navigator's highest rating for accountability and transparency.

// GCO IMPACT



45 community and faith-based partnerships



31 businesses and service partners joined our effort to help chronically un- and under-employed.



9 state leaders from around the southeast joining us in a work-focused anti-poverty initiative



411 healthy relationship workshop graduates



\$2 million additional funds to charter schools



104,908 students who benefit from school choice options



Social Media Reach
2.2 million impressions
19,600 engagements



180 Breakthrough attendees

// EDUCATIONAL IMPACT



“Before I came to Bright Futures Academy, I wasn’t going down the right path because of the group that I was hanging out with. But when I came here, everything changed. I met good people who would help me.”

– Mikayla Hill, 7th grader at Bright Futures Academy

Students at Bright Futures participate in the Tuition Tax Credit Program that GCO fought to create.



Those in poverty are the least likely to have access to quality educational options. They're the most likely to be trapped in failing schools simply because of their ZIP code. Here at GCO, we're opening doors for these students. We're working with lawmakers in the Georgia legislature to expand options for students in impoverished areas, while working locally to promote schools and organizations devoted to helping these students.

// EDUCATION PROFILE



Amy Jones: Giving foster families hope and educational options

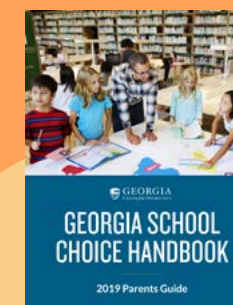
Amy Jones will be the first to tell you that being a foster parent is tough. But well worth the effort.

One of Amy's foster sons, Michael, has been in upwards of 20 schools during his educational journey.

Michael suffers from dyslexia and dysgraphia. He has experienced trauma, neglect, and abuse that have also contributed to his learning challenges.

The local public school simply wasn't a great fit for Michael. The Jones needed other options. Thanks to a local private tutor specializing in tutoring dyslexic learners, today Michael is thriving. He's grown from a kindergarten to second-grade reading level.

IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE IDENTITIES OF THE CHILD AND FAMILY, PSEUDONYMS AND STOCK IMAGERY HAVE BEEN USED.



The School Choice Handbook was produced in 2019 to help students in Georgia, like Michael, take advantage of options available to them.

**DOWNLOAD AT
GEORGIAOPPORTUNITY.ORG**

IMPACT AT A GLANCE



Enrollment in charter schools: **86,549**



Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Enrollment: **4,664**



Enrollment in Public Schools in Georgia: **1,764,215**



Charter school waiting list: **15,000**



Georgia Tax Credit Scholarship Enrollment: **13,895**



// JOBS IMPACT



“Hiring Well, Doing Good has given me hope, resources, and taught me strategies that help me make better decisions. It has empowered me to understand my abilities and how they relate in a job. I feel encouraged and inspired that I can be more than who I am!”

– Raquel Tarver



IMPACT AT A GLANCE



10 people participated in our Hiring Well, Doing Good pilot in Columbus



19 businesses
12 service providers joined our Columbus Initiative

We know that real change comes at the community level. It's when individuals, businesses, nonprofits, churches, and schools come together that real good is accomplished. And this is no less true when the goal is to lift people out of poverty, give them purpose, and strengthen the local economy. All of this is possible through the power of work.

The problem is that too many in our communities aren't enjoying the benefits of work. An estimated 6 million prime-age able-bodied men (in their mid 20s to early 50s) are absent from the labor force and not looking for work. Millions of youth are disconnected from education and jobs. Millions more are reliant on welfare to survive without an offramp to escape and move up the economic ladder.

That is why we created Hiring Well, Doing Good (HWDG). This initiative is dedicated to connecting individuals in the community with willing employers and wrap-around services. The result: renewed individuals, strengthened local economies, and transformed neighborhoods.

In 2019, HWDG launched its pilot program in Columbus, Georgia. This work was crucial for laying the groundwork for the eventual launch of the HWDG online platform, which will expand to even more cities in Georgia and across the Southeast in 2020. With our help, leaders in Nashville, TN launched their own HWDG initiative.

// JOBS PROFILE



Tony Kitchens: From prisoner to influencer

Tony was incarcerated as a teenager for 12 years. After his release in 1985, he knew he had a choice to make—follow a path that would lead him back to prison, or make the hard choices that would provide him with a future.

For Tony, the choice was simple: "I knew one thing: Even if I had to sleep in a gutter, I wasn't going back to prison."

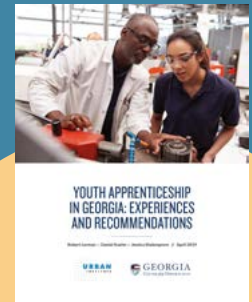
At the time, Tony had no job, no formal training, and no education. But an employer took a chance on Tony and hired him at a service station pumping gas.

Soon, Tony began to climb the economic ladder, pursuing an education and eventually earning a bachelor's degree. Another monumental change came in his life when he married and had his son.

Today, Tony has dedicated his life to helping other men and women, just like him, transition to a fulfilling life after prison. He is Field Director for Georgia for Prison Fellowship, and formerly served as a Prison In-Reach Specialist for the Georgia Department of Corrections.

And we're thrilled to report that Tony recently joined our board of directors here at the Georgia Center for Opportunity.

From prisoner to influencer. And the key driver was a job.



With an emphasis on "learn and earn," youth apprenticeships offer a compelling, affordable pathway through education and higher earnings for completers as young adults.

DOWNLOAD AT
GEORGIAOPPORTUNITY.ORG



VIEW TONY'S STORY
ON YOUTUBE

// FAMILY IMPACT



“[GCO’s team] helped me learn to look inward, identify what kind of woman I want, and also what man I want to be.”

– No Longer Bound Workshop Participant



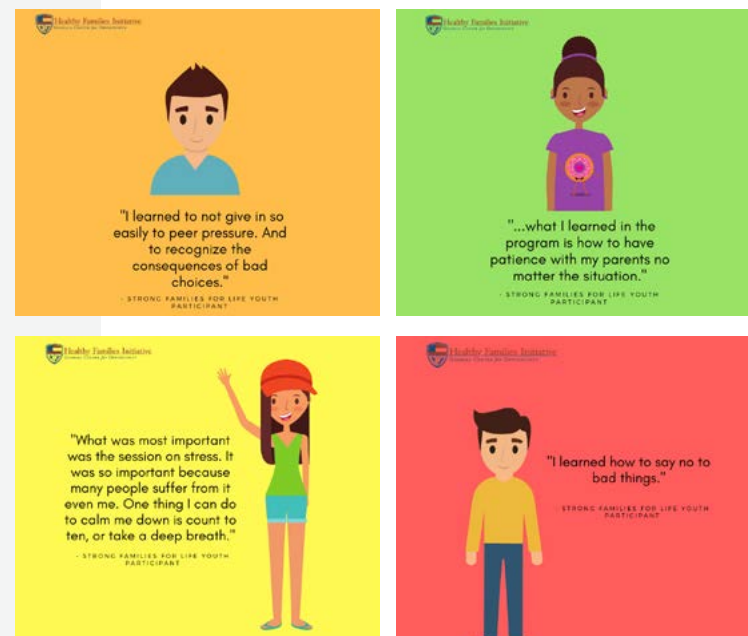
You don't have to look far to realize that too many families are broken. Thirty-six percent of children in Georgia live in single-parent homes, and 56 percent of kids from low-income families are in single-parent homes. Georgia's divorce rate is among the highest in the U.S. Particularly for less well-off households, the impacts of family breakdown are even more acutely felt.

We know that people from all walks of life flourish when they have an intact, healthy family and strong relationships. Enter our Healthy Families Initiative (HFI). HFI reaches into the communities we serve to provide relationship and family education.

This year, we've reached even more Hispanic families, launched a web series with Licensed Certified Professionals, began new relationships with some of our targeted audiences, began new partnerships that developed into new relationship education classes, and gained tremendous interest from middle schools for family education classes in 2020.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Through online advertising, HFI is being introduced to more people in all walks of life. Our ad campaigns have seen great success in engaging members of the community who otherwise wouldn't know HFI and the resources offered through the program.



// FAMILY PROFILE



Rodney Kellum: Putting Family First

As a young worker, Rodney nearly worked himself into a heart attack before he realized how much critical time he was missing with his son.

"I realized that I was spending my most valuable commodity, my time, on my employer rather than my family," Rodney said. "That moment was a defining one in my life. It shifted everything."

Today, Rodney loves being with his family and that time together is what fills him up. He heads up Speak Life inspirational speaking to challenge fathers to be present in their children's lives.

A project he says he is "proud to partner with GCO" on.

"There is more to this life, and I have more to do with this small amount of time that I have. Spending time with them will matter a whole lot more than 'Well, he was a hard worker.' That's a pretty bland tombstone," Rodney said.



"I just don't think anyone making the rules knows what we are going through."
— quote from IGP Participant.

VIEW AT
GEORGIAOPPORTUNITY.ORG

 VIEW RODNEY'S
STORY ON YOUTUBE

// DONOR PROFILE

Adolph Coors Foundation

GCO is supported by a number of extraordinary individuals and organizations that have partnered with us to address poverty. One such organization is the Adolph Coors Foundation. This organization is “dedicated to ensuring that all people have the opportunity to realize their dreams and reach their full potential. They find and fund organizations that are among the best at what they do, and in some cases, challenge them to think even bigger.”

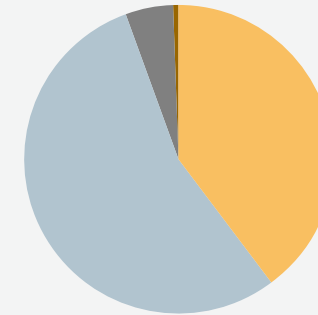


“GCO has an exceptional team that knows how to get work done. It has been my privilege to walk alongside them as they further develop Hiring Well, Doing Good.”

**– Carrie Tynan,
Executive Director**

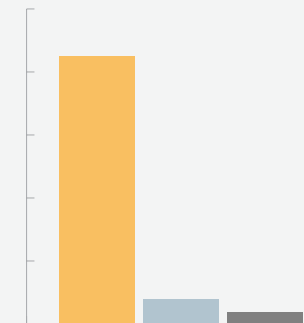
We are so grateful for the support of the Adolph Coors Foundation. Carrie Tynan, Executive Director, has been GCO’s advocate to her board for our work around fixing safety net programs and employment. Carrie says, “Our Foundation believes the Georgia Center for Opportunity has emerged as a leader in the area of welfare reform. They cut to the chase in identifying the obstacles to reform, the penalties to work, and the disincentives for healthy family formation. We feel Georgia Center’s community-based approach is the perfect laboratory for testing policy reform on a local level before pushing reforms on the national level.” With Carrie’s support, the Adolph Coors Foundation has invested generously in GCO’s employment work so that more individuals can experience the pride and dignity of a job.

// GCO FINANCIALS



TOTAL REVENUE

Individuals	\$831,418
Foundations	\$1,136,500
Corporations	\$106,435
Other	\$6,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$2,080,353



TOTAL EXPENSES

Program	\$2,119,836
Administrative	\$196,667
Fundraising	\$94,494
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,410,997



PROGRAM BREAKDOWN

Education	\$495,425
Employment	\$1,107,713
Family Formation	\$516,698
TOTAL BREAKDOWN	\$2,119,836