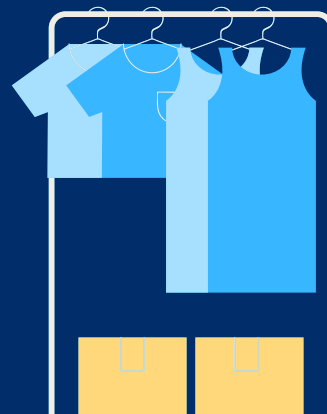


2025 Impact Report



A Letter from Our President

Dear Caring Link Family,

What an incredible year it's been! At the start of 2025, we were operating 12 Care Closets across our community. Today, we are proud to support 25 Care Closets, providing direct access to everyday essentials for more than 17,000 children throughout Madison County. This growth reflects both the rising need for resource security and the power of meeting students where they are. When children have what they need, we see them thrive—socially, emotionally, and academically.

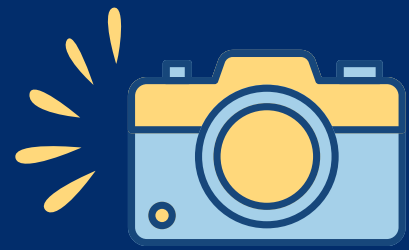
Our impact has been matched by the growth of our volunteer community. As our service area has expanded, so has the number of compassionate individuals ready to step in and serve. Our volunteers are truly the heart of this work, showing up day after day to uplift and care for the children who need it most.

As we look ahead to 2026, with more closets on the horizon, I want to say thank you. Your generosity, dedication, and belief in this mission have allowed us to grow beyond what we imagined and have reminded thousands of children that they matter and that their community stands firmly behind them.

Wishing you many blessings in the new year!

Kate O'Neal

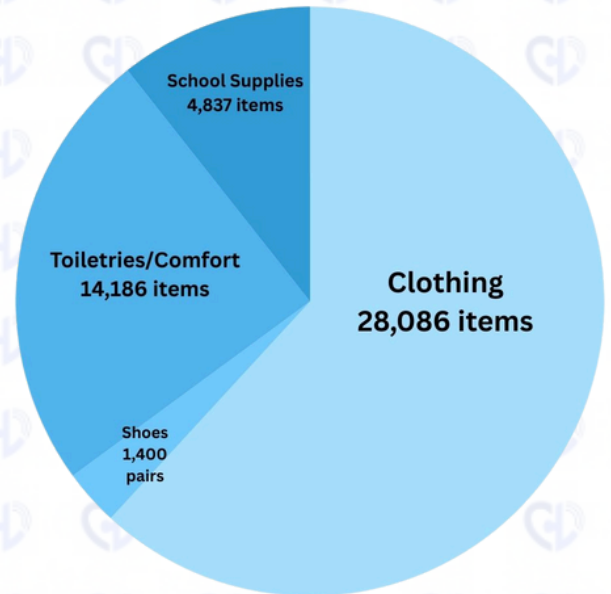
Year-End Snapshot



During 2025, we gave

48,500+

items to students in need.



This marks a total of

\$226,000+

invested in our children.



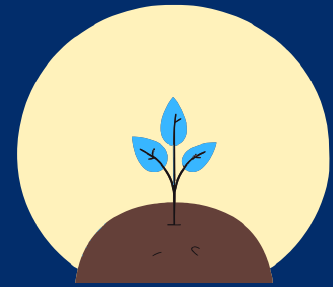
More importantly, we have provided resource security to

17,000+

students across the
Madison County community.



Growing The Good



25 Care Closets in '25!

In a numerical twist that feels almost kismet, we reached a milestone that perfectly matched the year itself: **25 operational Care Closets by the end of 2025.**

With the generous financial support of the **Junior League of Huntsville**, we installed three new Care Closets within the Sparkman cluster—serving Sparkman Middle School, Sparkman 9th Grade School, and Sparkman High School. Additionally, through a transformative grant from **Toyota's Driving Possibilities** initiative, we established 10 new Care Closets in North Huntsville, expanding our reach to more than **17,000 students** across the schools listed below.

This growth represents more than numbers. It means more children than ever now have direct, dignified access to the essential resources they need each day—strengthening their connection to school, building trust with educators, and opening the door to brighter futures filled with confidence, opportunity, and possibility.



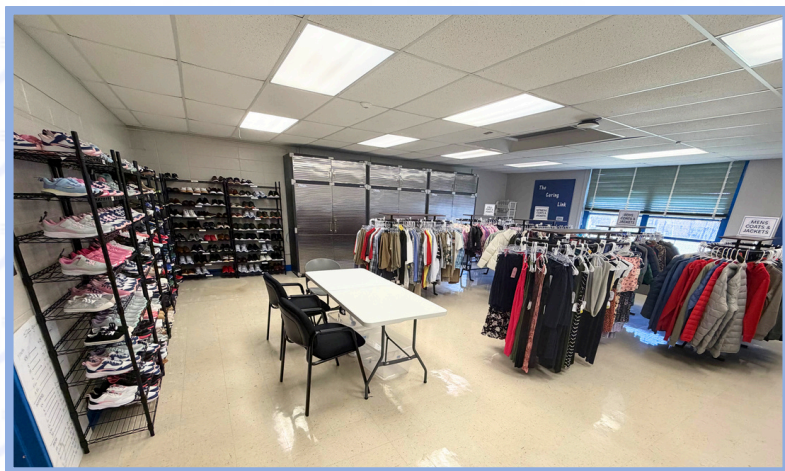
Our Care Closets

- Blossomwood Elementary
- MCSS Central Office
- Chapman Middle School
- Dawson Elementary
- Hazel Green Elementary
- Hazel Green High School
- Highlands Elementary
- Jemison High School
- Lakewood Elementary
- Lee High School
- Lynn Fanning Elementary
- Madison Cross Roads Elem.
- McNair Junior High School
- Meridianville Middle School
- MLK, Jr. Elementary
- Montview Elementary
- Moores Mill Intermediate
- New Market Elementary
- Ridgecrest Elementary
- Rolling Hills Elementary
- Sonnie Hereford Elementary
- Sparkman 9th Grade School
- Sparkman High School
- Sparkman Middle School
- Walnut Grove Elementary



In November, we established a new distribution facility for our Huntsville City Schools, in partnership with the HCS District, at the Academy for Science & Foreign Language.

This new space allows us to effectively meet the needs of the additional 5,000 students being served through the Toyota Driving Possibilities Care Closets.



Our Support Programs



Our Book Fairy program provided

1,416 students

with the ability to shop their school book fairs, totaling

\$7,630

in free reading materials for kids.

Our Feed Our Friends program distributed over

\$19,000

worth of food assistance and snacks for hungry students.



Our Care to Join program provided

\$6,260

in extracurricular funding for local students, including STEM camp tuition, field trip costs, sports participation, & more.

Our Treated with Care program gave school nurses

\$10,500

in unrestricted funding to promote the health and well-being of our students.



New Beginnings 2025

Our New Beginnings school-readiness program provided

420 students

with over

\$85,000

in back-to-school resources, including clothing, shoes, and toiletry kits.



We are blessed with an amazing New Beginnings partner in Flint River Baptist Church who not only provided tailored school supplies for all of our students, but also opened their building for the second year in a row, connected families with compassionate hosts and guides, provided a hot meal for attendees, and fun extras like bounce houses. Their partnership makes New Beginnings possible and helps to start hundreds of students off on a path to success with love and kindness.



Services and Partners

- Free haircuts from licensed professionals
- Alabama Lions Sight (vision screenings)
- Hearing screenings
- Heals Clinic (wellness screenings)
- House of the Harvest (family meal boxes)
- Huntsville Public Library
- Alabama Partnership for Children
- Sleep in Heavenly Peace
- Huntsville Assistance Program (HAP)
- Huntsville Pregnancy Resource Center

Milestone Moments



During our 2025 HOCO and Prom Shop seasons, we gave out

803 formalwear items

including dresses, suits, shoes, and accessories, allowing students to look and feel their best at these milestone events.

In addition, our dedicated team of seamstresses altered 71 items free of charge so that every fit was Fairy Godmother approved. ✨



In addition to our formalwear shops, our 2nd Annual Halloween BOO-tique was a pumpkin-smashing success, giving away

391 costume items 🦋

so that local children could participate in the fun of the holiday alongside their peers.



Our Heart: Volunteers



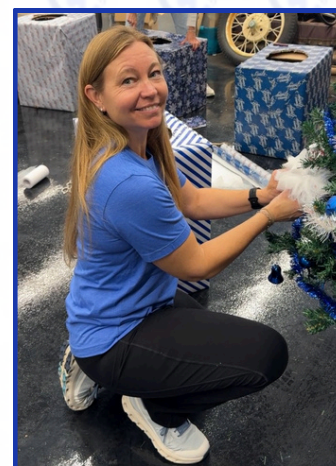
During 2025, our care was made possible through the help of

408 volunteers

who served a combined

9,300+ hours

allowing children to feel the love and support of their larger community.



This includes

53 Closet Team Members

who showed up every week to ensure that our Care Closets are well-stocked and ready to serve the students who need them most.

Teacher Testimonials



The greatest testament to the work we do comes from the teachers who care for and champion our students every single day. Their firsthand insights paint a valuable picture of the impact of our mission—showing how our Care Closets and supporting programs help children move beyond moments of crisis into stages of growth.

“I noticed a student walking in pain and complaining about their shoes hurting their feet. The student wanted to continue to take the shoes off but did not want to walk around classroom peers with their shoes off. I knew that the student would not have been functional with hurting feet. So, I requested the use of the Care Closet. The student felt better and bragged on having a new pair of shoes that didn't hurt. I feel that the Care Closet is a great amenity and necessity for some students and is REALLY GREAT for the school to be able to help those that are in need that may otherwise not have the opportunity to do better and feel better.”

“Our Care Closet helps ensure every student has what they need to feel safe, comfortable, and ready to learn. From extra clothing and hygiene items to basic necessities, it quietly meets needs with dignity and compassion—reminding our students they are seen, valued, and cared for.”

“The Care Closet is an incredible help from the nursing perspective. We have students in all grades that turn to the Care Closet needing a fresh pair of clothing after bathroom accidents, nose bleeds, spills, and episodes of vomiting. No parent wants to pick their student up from school in soiled clothing and no kiddo wants to sit in soiled clothing waiting to be picked up. With close to 1,000 students at our school, we use our closet daily and often multiple times a day. I love knowing that it is a resource that we can use, but I love even more knowing that I can give students options to pick between shirts or pants that they need. We can all agree that having a bathroom accident at school is embarrassing, but allowing students the freedom to pick between multiple replacement clothing options allows the students to reclaim some of that power autonomy they feel like they have lost.”

Service Recognitions



While recognition is never our goal, we appreciate the honors given in support of our efforts to help children across our community.

In 2025, we were presented with several significant honors, a few of which are detailed below.



In November, our President Kate O'Neal was deeply honored to receive the Nascar Foundation's Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award, which recognizes fan volunteers making a difference in their communities. This was a team win for all of The Caring Link, as our collective efforts and service made it possible.

This national honor blessed our organization with \$100,000 in funding for the addition of two new Care Closets as well as support for our New Beginnings program, our other student-support programs, and our newly opened Huntsville Resource Center.



For the third year in a row, The Caring Link was named as a finalist for the Outreach of the Year Award at the Grounds for Hope event hosted by the Trideum Foundation. Our organization took home the coveted People's Choice Award, given to the nonprofit with the most community votes.



This year, our President was honored as a Community Champion by Redstone Federal Credit Union. Like the Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award, this recognition is only made possible by the united work of over 400 volunteers and hundreds of donors who maximize our impact and further our direct-to-student services while changing young lives.

Our Leadership Team



Christine Backus
Treasurer



Michelle Brady
Director



Faith Dunham
Vice President



Alicia Hamilton
Director



Melanie Hartwig
Director



Theresa Hubbard
Director



Brook-lyn Norman
Director



Rachel Norton
Secretary



Kate O'Neal
President



Melissa Pogue
Director



Vikerria Rankins
Director



Sonya Turner
Director

Our 2025-26 Sponsors



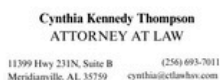
Closet Founders



Partners



Benefactors



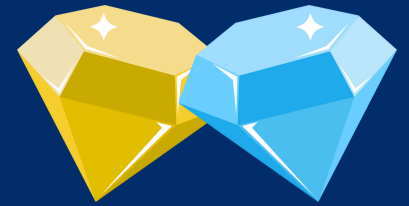
Advocates



Supporters



Our 2025 GEM Donors

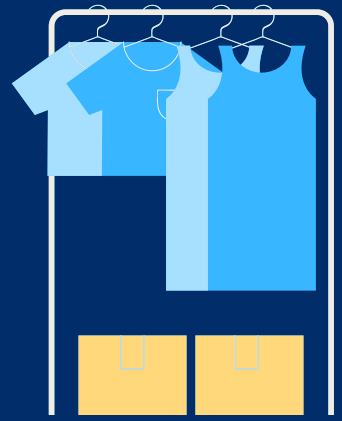


Thank you to our 2025 GEM donors—those who *Give Every Month* to ensure our Care Closets remain stocked and ready to serve the children who need them most.

Your steadfast commitment provides a consistent, reliable flow of essential resources, allowing students to focus less on what they lack and more on learning, confidence, and success.

- 
- Katherine Barfield
 - Meaghan Bentley
 - Michelle Brady
 - Ann Duncan
 - Debra Fuller
 - April Grove
 - Holly Gubics
 - Theresa Hubbard
 - Selena Hughes
 - Carolyn Meadows
 - Debra Moriarity

- Leslie Norris
 - Emily Penny
 - Jennifer Perry
 - Taylor Pickett
 - Sonja Rossow
 - Denise Schrimsher
 - Harmony Sheaffer
 - Charles Smith
 - Barbara Walker
 - Becky West
 - Lori Worcester
- 



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