



Upper Cumberland
Development District &
Upper Cumberland
Human Resource Agency

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

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IN REMEMBRANCE

We honor the memory of three extraordinary individuals who passed within the last year, each of whom served on UCDD and UCHRA boards and committees, among others, over the years. Their dedication, service, and leadership made a lasting impact on the Upper Cumberland region. Though they are no longer with us, the work they championed and the lives they touched remain a lasting testament to their commitment.



Marie Ferran

Marie was a dedicated advocate and community leader in the Upper Cumberland region. A graduate of the University of Memphis' Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, she worked tirelessly as an advocate for the elderly. Her commitment to service extended into every facet of her life. Marie, once the Executive Director for Aging Services for the Upper Cumberland, Inc., advocated for healthcare equality, served on numerous boards for organizations assisting women and at-risk youth, and volunteered extensively with local theater groups.



Marvin Lusk

A U.S. Air Force veteran and two-time Tennessee State University graduate, Marvin served for 41 years as Vice-President of TCAT McMinnville while operating the Lusk Family Farm in Warren County. Known for his profound kindness, Marvin was a driving force in the community, receiving the 2009 Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year award. His extensive service included leadership roles in numerous organizations, such as the UCDD, UCHRA, and the McMinnville Housing Authority. Marvin was also a faithful member of Hiawassee Church of Christ.



Randy Heady

A proud resident of Jackson County, Tenn., Randy's impact extended far beyond his local community. He served for eight years as a County Commissioner before being elected Jackson County Mayor in 2018, where he represented the county's interests with passion and integrity. Randy was known for chairing numerous committees, advocating tirelessly for regional progress. Beyond his civic duties, Randy built a 28-year career with Carwile Mechanical in Cookeville, Tenn., and served as the devoted Pastor for New Hope Baptist Church in Gainesboro, Tenn.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

As we contemplate the future, it's natural to reflect on our journey and marvel at the progress we've made. Like many of you, I am consistently impressed when I look back at where we started versus where we stand today. Every year, I am amazed by the scope of programs and services our dedicated staff provides to the Upper Cumberland region.

Over the past five years, we have been at the forefront of regional efforts, leading the way in poverty reduction, providing crucial support for those in need, and strategically planning for the region's future.

This vital work is not accomplished in isolation; we benefit from the tireless efforts of our many partner agencies, who work alongside us to improve the lives of our citizens. Furthermore, this success would be impossible without the essential oversight and unwavering support from the region's elected officials.

Looking ahead to 2026, while the specifics are uncertain, I have absolute confidence that I will once again be astonished by how much farther we have come.



MARK FARLEY

Executive Director
UCDD and UCHRA

Since 2018, the Upper Cumberland Development District (UCDD) and the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) have operated under a shared management agreement, guided by one unified Executive Director and shared administrative and finance teams.

While each agency remains distinct, maintaining its own programs, responsibilities, and service areas within the 14-county Upper Cumberland region, UCDD and UCHRA share the same mission and vision for the communities they serve.

Together, these agencies provide vital services and support to the more than 378,000 people who call the region home.

OUR VISION:

A region abundant in resources, fostering a productive and vibrant life for the people of the Upper Cumberland.

OUR MISSION:

To help the Upper Cumberland region cultivate self-sufficiency and build true wealth through innovation, collaboration, and leadership.



OUR BOARD

CANNON COUNTY

Greg Mitchell, County Executive
Stan Hollandsworth, Mayor-Woodbury
Martye Jean Harris, Mayor-Auburntown
Greg Goff, Industrial Representative

CLAY COUNTY

Dale Reagan, County Mayor
Luke Collins, Mayor-Celina
Doug Young, Industrial Representative

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Allen Foster, County Mayor
Emmett Sherrill, Mayor-Crab Orchard
R.J. Crawford, Mayor-Crossville
Don Dowdey, Mayor-Pleasant Hill
Ethan Hadley, Industrial Representative

DEKALB COUNTY

Matt Adcock, County Mayor
Josh Miller, Mayor-Smithville
Jeff Ford, Mayor-Alexandria
Greg Fish, Mayor-Dowelltown
Audrey Martin, Mayor-Liberty
Suzanne Williams, Industrial Representative

FENTRESS COUNTY

Jimmy Johnson, County Executive
Harvey Stowers, Mayor-Jamestown
Yvonne Gernt, Mayor-Allardt
Jacob Rosenbaum, Industrial Representative

JACKSON COUNTY

Jim Morgan, County Mayor
Lloyd Williams, Mayor-Gainesboro
Hope Vargas, Industrial Representative

MACON COUNTY

Steve Jones, County Mayor
Tony Day, Mayor-Lafayette
Kenneth Hollis, Mayor-Red Boiling Springs
Richard Thomas, Industrial Representative

OVERTON COUNTY

Steven Barlow, County Executive
Lori Burnett, Mayor-Livingston
Zach Stephens, Industrial Representative

PICKETT COUNTY

Stephen Bilbrey, County Executive
Sam Gibson, Mayor-Byrdstown
Bruce Elder, Industrial Representative

PUTNAM COUNTY

Randy Porter, County Mayor
Danny Holmes, Mayor-Baxter
Lisa Chapman-Fowler, Mayor-Algood
Alex Garcia, Mayor-Monterey
Laurin Wheaton, Mayor-Cookeville
Amy New, Industrial Representative

SMITH COUNTY

Jeff Mason, County Mayor
Anthony Hackett, Mayor-Carthage
Joey Nixon, Mayor-South Carthage
John Potts, Mayor-Gordonsville
Patrick Geho, Industrial Representative

VAN BUREN COUNTY

David Sullivan, County Executive
Alisa Farmer, Mayor-Spencer

WARREN COUNTY

Terry Bell, County Executive
Ryle Chastain, Mayor-McMinnville
John Hankins, Mayor-Centertown
Trent Prater, Mayor-Viola
Sue Anderson, Mayor-Morrison
Wendy Sneed, Industrial Representative

WHITE COUNTY

Denny Wayne Robinson, County Executive
Jerry Lowery, Mayor-Sparta
Ray Spivey, Mayor-Doyle
Rodger McCann, Industrial Representative

LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS

Representative Cameron Sexton
Senator Paul Bailey

Denotes Executive Committee Members

UCHRA POLICY COUNCIL

- Elected Officials/Local Representatives
- Sam Gibson, Mayor-Byrdstown (Chairman)
- Charlene Whittaker, McMinnville Electric Systems
- Keisha Richards, Crossville Housing
- Cindy Putman, WCTE Central Tennessee PBS
- Zach Gilpin, Cookeville Police Department

Consumer Representatives

- Misty Phy, Overton County
- Barbara Wheeler, Jackson County
- Patti Ognibene, Putnam County
- Bob DePriest, DeKalb County
- Linda Pastrick, Pickett County
- Marilyn Davis, Warren County

Provider Representatives

- Phil Fox, UCDD/AAAD (Social Assistance)
- Kristi Paling, TN Commission on Children and Youth (Children's Services)
- Tracie Long, Aging Services for the Upper Cumberland (Aging Services)
- Bill Gibson, Power of Putnam (Substance Abuse Services)
- Anne Stamps, Volunteer Behavioral Health (Mental Health Services)
- Michael Burton, TN Department of Corrections (Corrections Services)

Minority Representative

- Alejandra Cisneros-Conohan, Putnam County



Jeff Mason, Chairman of the Board (UCDD and UCHRA) addresses attendees of the 2024 UCDD and UCHRA Annual Meeting.

OUR TEAM

At the Upper Cumberland Development District (UCDD) and the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA), our mission is rooted in a shared commitment to helping people thrive. Together, our dedicated team provides a comprehensive network of services that supports individuals, families, businesses, and communities across the Upper Cumberland.

From aging and disability support to housing, community development, economic development, small business assistance, public transportation, community intervention, family services, and recovery support, our agencies work together to meet the region’s evolving needs. We are proud to introduce the leadership team guiding this work and ensuring our programs remain effective and focused on improving the quality of life for those we serve. Their vision, experience, and commitment to public service shape our direction and empower our staff to deliver meaningful, lasting change across the region.



LANELLE GODSEY

UCHRA Deputy
Director/Community
Services Director



TOMMY LEE

UCDD Deputy Director



GINGER STOUT

Finance Director



HOLLY MONTTOOTH

Public Transportation
Director (UCHRA)

440

**COMBINED, UCDD AND
UCHRA EMPLOY 440 OF
THE REGION’S MOST
PASSIONATE AND
SKILLED INDIVIDUALS**

UPPER CUMBERLAND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT &
UPPER CUMBERLAND HUMAN RESOURCE AGENCY
2025 ANNUAL REPORT



HOLLY WILLIAMS

Aging Services Director
(UCDD)



MEGAN CHOATE

Economic Development
and Lending Director
(UCDD)



MEGAN SPURGEON

Empower Upper
Cumberland Director
(UCHRA)



MELISSA HOISINGTON

Community Intervention
Director (UCDD)



MYRA WALKER

Housing and Family
Services Director
(UCDD)



PATTY RAY

CHANCE Group Home
Director (UCHRA)



SHERRY BILBREY

Field Services Manager
(UCHRA)



SHERRY THURMAN

Administrative Services
Director (UCDD)



UCDD and UCHRA leadership discuss strategic
planning and programmatic efforts during the
management team retreat.

ABOUT US

At UCDD and UCHRA, we are passionate about helping people.

Through our wide array of services, we connect individuals, families, businesses, and local officials with the resources they need to improve their quality of life. Combined, UCDD and UCHRA employ approximately 440 of the region's most passionate and skilled individuals to better meet the needs of the Upper Cumberland.

UCDD is designated by the Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging as the **Area Agency on Aging and Disability (AAAD)** to advocate, plan, and coordinate a service delivery system that meets community and social service needs. The AAAD strives for the Upper Cumberland's older adults, adults with physical disabilities, and caregivers to achieve and maintain active, healthy, and independent lives.

211,721

MEALS SERVED OR DELIVERED
TO OLDER ADULTS AND THOSE
WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

883

IN-HOME SERVICES CLIENTS
SERVED BY AAAD (1,291 ON
WAITING LIST)

1,100+

ATTENDEES AT THE 2025 UPPER
CUMBERLAND SENIOR &
CAREGIVER EXPO



The **Economic Development and Lending** department works with community leaders to secure grant funds primarily for industrial development, as well as offering loans to small businesses seeking to expand and create jobs. Our team, along with other key stakeholders, also works to engage legislators on the urgent need for quality childcare in the Upper Cumberland, highlighting how early education investments strengthen families and workforce development.

UCDD offers a variety of **Planning & Community Development** services to communities across the region, including grant writing, administration, and technical assistance related to land use and zoning, solid waste, historic preservation, and housing. UCDD provides data collection and analysis. These services are often used for planning, grant applications, presentations, and publications.

\$23.6M

**GRANT DOLLARS AWARDED
(TOTAL OF 233 GRANTS
SUBMITTED)**

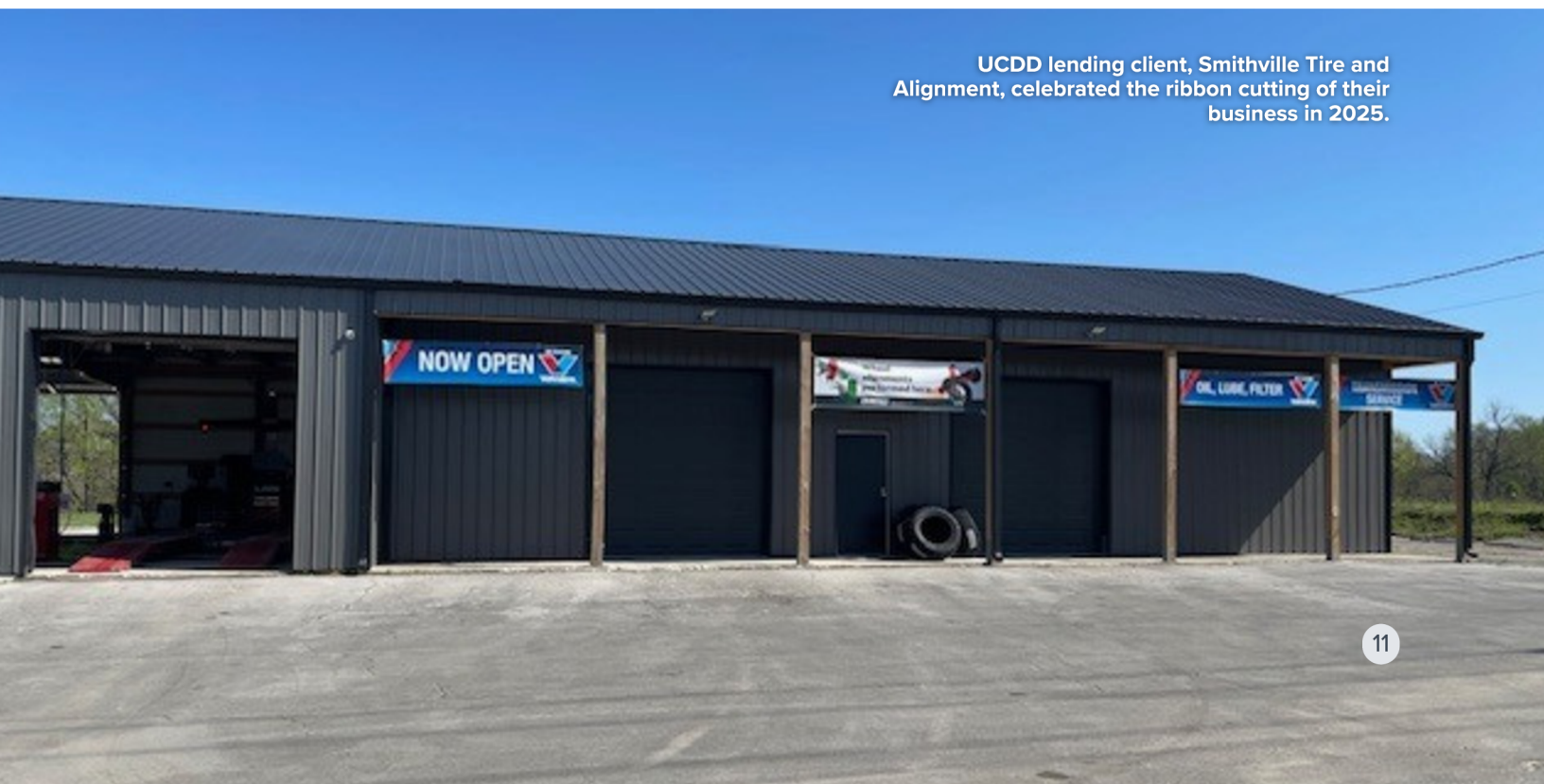
\$8.3M

**CAPITAL INFUSION INTO SMALL
BUSINESSES VIA SBDC**

178

**NUMBER OF SMALL BUSINESS
CLIENTS SERVED**

UCDD lending client, Smithville Tire and Alignment, celebrated the ribbon cutting of their business in 2025.



25

**HOMES REPAIRED THROUGH THE
EMERGENCY HOME REPAIR
PROGRAM**

18

**CHILDREN KEPT OUT OF STATE
CUSTODY (THROUGH RCP)**

\$9.5M

**IN ACTIVE LOANS ACROSS ALL 14
COUNTIES**

UCDD also staffs the **Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**, which provides free counseling, technical support, and connections to financing, including the business development loan fund through UCDD.

The Economic Development and Lending department has also partnered with Empower Upper Cumberland as a core partner focused on removing barriers to entering the workforce and advancing families' economic standing.

UCDD's **Housing and Family Services** team provides affordable housing to low-income seniors, individuals with disabilities, and transitional housing for those in recovery. The department also administers programs that provide support to relative caregivers and housing repairs to those in need.



UCDD's Housing and Family Services' recovery housing program was recognized during the National Association of Development Organizations' conference.

UCHRA offers a variety of **Public Transportation** services, from door-to-door rides, scheduled shuttle services, inner-city bus routes, and driver education. The transportation call center uses innovation and technology to find the “right fit” solution for customers, allowing riders to quickly and easily schedule a trip and simply enjoy the ride to their destination.

UCHRA’s **Community Intervention** department provides alternatives to incarceration for juvenile and adult offenders, corrective education programs, and residential programs for troubled youth. The department also offers a DUI school (Putnam County only) and oversees the day reporting center program.

Day reporting centers (DRCs) provide supervision and services in 12 Upper Cumberland counties, offering a variety of programs and services designed to address rehabilitation, supervision, treatment, education, programming, and re-entry services through a carefully designed curriculum.

The **UC Recovery** team offers a comprehensive list of support services to clients, including transitional housing, workforce re-entry, transportation, and case management.

1,257

**AVERAGE DAILY TRIPS PROVIDED
BY UCHRA PUBLIC
TRANSPORTATION**

38,811

EMPLOYMENT TRIPS PROVIDED

94%

**ON-TIME ARRIVAL RATE FOR
UCHRA PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
RIDERS**



The **Community Services** department oversees several programs that provide support to vulnerable populations, including home energy assistance through utility payments (LIHEAP), home weatherization assistance, an affordable home repair service for seniors (HouseCall), in-home care, childcare nutrition (CACFP) job training for individuals age 55 and older (SCSEP), sales of Ensure and Glucerna at local county offices, and an early childhood development program, Van Buren County Head Start.

UCHRA staffs an office in each Upper Cumberland county, providing access to the programs described above through personal service and community outreach. Clients receive hands-on assistance with applications and information.

Led by UCHRA, the designated backbone organization, **Empower UC** is tasked with serving the most vulnerable populations of the 14-county Upper Cumberland region with a core objective of lifting 1,600 children and their families out of generational poverty. ■

\$3.46M

IN LIHEAP ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

\$624,034

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD
PROGRAM DOLLARS REIMBURSED
TO DAYCARE HOMES

543

FAMILIES SERVED BY EMPOWER UC

55%

ANNUAL AVERAGE SALARY
INCREASE SINCE ENROLLMENT IN
EMPOWER UC



Cortlind McCutcheon, Empower Navigator, and Amber Milligan, Cannon County Coordinator, attend a local back-to-school outreach event.

ROI SNAPSHOT

For just \$2, a child in a participating daycare is fed a nutritious meal and snacks.

The Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS), supplements the cost of meals and snacks to caregivers for children enrolled in approved or licensed day care homes.



2025 EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR



- **Tammy Kulpa**, Human Resources Coordinator (UCDD)
- **Connie Vassilev**, CHOICES Support Assistant (UCDD)
- **Pam Sanford**, Community Intervention Administrative Assistant (UCHRA)
- **Melissa Moore**, In-Home Services Supervisor (UCHRA)
- **Carol Watson**, Fentress County Coordinator (UCHRA)
- **Sheila Ooten**, County Office Support (UCHRA) *No Photo Available*
- **Jessie Lusk**, Empower UC Resource Coordinator (UCDD)
- **Cortlind McCutcheon**, Empower Navigator (UCHRA)
- **Robin Mayberry**, Financial Assistant (UCDD)
- **Vicki Beck**, RCP Advocate/Senior Case Management (UCDD)
- **Sean Patten**, Transportation Planner/Center Hill RPO Coordinator (UCDD)
- **Donny Miller**, Rural Driver of the Year – Region 1 (UCHRA)
- **Victor Ketrang**, Rural Driver of the Year – Region 2 (UCHRA)
- **Roy Brown**, Rural Driver of the Year – Region 3 (UCHRA)
- **Maxine Anderson**, Transportation: Regional Dispatcher (UCHRA)
- **Penny Hix**, Transportation: Regional Dispatcher (UCHRA)
- **Lashay Dobson**, Transportation: Regional Dispatcher (UCHRA)
- **Stephanie Rigsby**, Transportation: Regional Dispatcher (UCHRA)
- **Paula Rigsby**, Transportation: Regional Dispatcher (UCHRA)



Our agencies come together twice each year to complete required training and share a few fun moments together.

UCHRA PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ROADEO WINNERS



- **Daniel Holmes**, First Place - Maintenance Division
- **Joey Bitter**, Second Place - Maintenance Division
- **Billy Gilbert**, First Place - T-350 Category
- **John Pistol**, Second Place - T-350 Category
- **Sheryl Stephens**, Third Place - T-350 Category
- **Jonny Maynard**, First Place - Cutaway Division
- **Billy Gilbert**, Second Place - Cutaway Division
- **Michael Smith**, Third Place - Cutaway Division

As part of the agency-wide fall training event, UCHRA Public Transportation holds its annual rodeo driving skills competition. Winners from this event then go on to compete during the statewide competition.





UCHRA's Public Transportation team made the Upper Cumberland proud during the statewide Tennessee Public Transportation Association (TPTA) Rodeo and Conference, an annual event that celebrates excellence, skill, and leadership in public transit across Tennessee.

Winners of the local Upper Cumberland Rodeo went on to compete during the statewide conference and driving competition.



Two UCHRA team members were recognized for their achievements. Joe Bitter earned second place in the Van Mechanic Division, demonstrating his technical expertise and commitment to vehicle safety and performance. Holly Montooth was named Rural Executive or Manager of the Year, a distinction recognizing her leadership, dedication, and contributions to rural transit operations in the Upper Cumberland region. ■



LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR



Representative Kelly Keisling

Since 2010, Tennessee State Representative Keisling has served District 38, which includes Clay, Macon, Pickett, Scott, and part of Fentress counties. He is a member of several legislative committees, including the Commerce and Judiciary Committees. In addition to his legislative duties, he is the President of Keisling Insurance and actively participates in various Chambers of Commerce and the Children's Center of the Cumberlands. Keisling has been happily married to Janet for more than 50 years and is a proud father of three, grandfather of seven, and great-grandfather of two.



Senator Paul Bailey

Representing District 15, Tennessee State Senator Bailey covers Cumberland, Jackson, Overton, Bledsoe, Putnam, and White counties. He chairs the Commerce and Labor Committee and also serves on the Fiscal Review and Transportation and Safety Committees. Senator Bailey, a lifelong resident of Upper Cumberland, resides on a farm in White County with his wife, Amy, and their son, Caleb. Together with his father, he co-founded CB Trucking, a family business that began with two used trucks and has since grown to employ 100 people. The Bailey family remains actively involved in the business's daily operations.

ROI SNAPSHOT

ONE DOLLAR. **TRIPLE** THE IMPACT.

*Every \$1 generated locally unlocks \$3
in matching funds for rides to dialysis &
other critical medical appointments.*



STARS OF THE UPPER CUMBERLAND

The Stars of the Upper Cumberland initiative, which launched in 2024, celebrates the extraordinary individuals, groups, and organizations whose dedication and service make a lasting impact in their communities. Each year, leaders from all 14 counties select one remarkable honoree from their area, recognizing their commitment, passion, and contributions during the UCDD and UCHRA annual meeting. Together, these Stars shine as examples of the very best in community leadership, selfless service, and the spirit of giving that strengthens the region as a whole. Learn more about the 2025 cohort on the following pages.

The Putnam County Veterans Honor Guard were among the inaugural Stars of the Upper Cumberland.

CANNON COUNTY

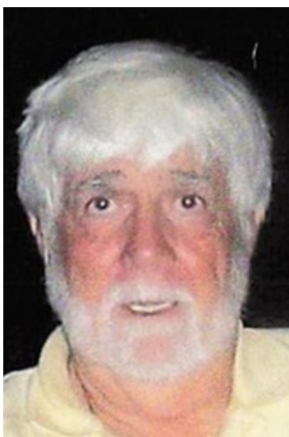
ROY SULLIVAN



Roy Sullivan has served as the 911 Director for more than 18 years and is the founding director of the Cannon County 911 Emergency Communications District. In 2008, he centralized dispatch services from the Sheriff's Department. He has also been the EMA Director for eight years and has 24 years of experience as an EMT. Cannon County Executive Greg Mitchell commended Sullivan for his dedication, proactive development efforts, and successful pursuit of grant funding for the community and the EMA department.

CLAY COUNTY

THOMAS WATSON



Thomas Watson began his education at a one-room school, graduated from Celina High School and Middle Tennessee State University, and served as a teacher and basketball coach. After retiring, he became the Technology Coordinator for Clay County Schools, developing the district's fiber network. Later, he was elected Director of ExCeed and appointed Curator of the Historic Clay County Courthouse in 2013. For more than 13 years, he worked on restoring the courthouse, securing grants from various organizations and involving local residents in the Adopt a Window project, significantly preserving this historical landmark.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

STEVEN STONE



Steve Stone is dedicated to community well-being and advocacy, actively involved in various organizations in Cumberland County and the Upper Cumberland region. His roles include being a member and volunteer at Cumberland Fellowship Church, a board member of the Cumberland County Foster Care Board, Cumberland Good Samaritans, Cumberland Prevention Coalition, and Trauma-Informed Community Alliance. He is also an appointee to the Tennessee Board of Utility Regulation, a leader at The Fourth Dimension Inc., and a commissioner for Middle Tennessee Gas. Through these positions, he champions vulnerable populations, supports trauma-informed initiatives, enhances utility oversight, and promotes spiritual and civic engagement.

DEKALB COUNTY

DEAN ADCOCK



Dean Adcock, a lifelong Smithville resident, has dedicated his life to hard work and community service. He worked in the garment industry from 1956 to 1975, then spent a decade in the nursery business before becoming a mail courier. A committed volunteer, Dean served with Meals on Wheels, spent 10 years on the Farm Bureau Board, and was an eight-year DeKalb County Commissioner. He helped establish the Live and Let Live homeless shelter in 2019 and continues to lead its efforts, emphasizing the need for volunteers.

FENTRESS COUNTY

BILLY JENNINGS, SR



Billy Jennings Sr. made a significant impact in Fentress County when he acquired Jennings Funeral Home in April 1977. That same year, he initiated a service through the Red Cross for veterans and deployed service members, ensuring that their families were acknowledged during difficult times. He has served on the E911 Board for Fentress County and has been a dedicated member of West Fentress Baptist Church since 1977. In late 2025, he proudly received his Masonic 50-year pin, further highlighting his commitment to the community. His contributions have truly made him an invaluable asset to Fentress County for many years.

JACKSON COUNTY

KEITH BEAN



Keith Bean plays a pivotal role in Jackson County, where he serves as the Director of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Emergency Management Agency (EMA). In addition to these critical responsibilities, he is also a dedicated death investigator for the county. His commitment to public safety extends further as he holds the esteemed position of Chief at the Dodson Branch Volunteer Fire Department. Through his unwavering leadership and dedication during significant events in Jackson County, Keith has proven himself to be an invaluable asset to the community. His comprehensive expertise and steadfast commitment to serving the public ensure that the residents of Jackson County are in capable and caring hands.

MACON COUNTY

STEVE WALKER



Steve Walker began his career in 1982 as the 4-H agent for the University of Tennessee Agriculture Extension Service in Macon County, where he helped establish the Macon County Fair and served on its board for 30 years. He later promoted agriculture for local farmers and contributed to various community initiatives, including the 911 committee and the Chamber of Commerce. After 33 years of service, he retired and now enjoys a quieter life on his hobby farm, Autumn Chase, with his wife, Beverly, and their two daughters and five grandchildren. Steve values his community contributions and continues to stay active in his faith and family.

OVERTON COUNTY

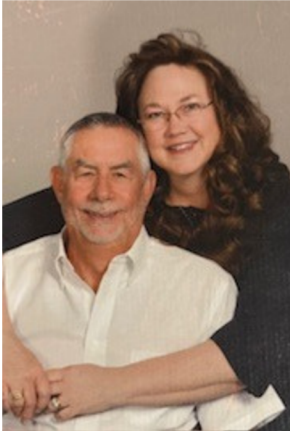
CARL MASTERS



At 95, Carl Masters is a respected community figure in Overton County, known for his service and integrity. A U.S. Army veteran and lifelong resident, he served from 1951-1953 and spent 29 years with the Tennessee Department of Human Services, including as Overton County Director. His work in the 1960s significantly improved local families' lives. Masters has published a memoir, *Footpaths and Foot Logs – Life History of Carl Masters*, in 2020, and is a devoted community member, never missing a Veterans Day program. He and his wife, Ethel, have two sons.

PICKETT COUNTY

GARY AND DEBBIE HILL



Gary and Debbie Hill embody hard work, family values, and community involvement. Gary, a Byrdstown native and industrial engineering graduate, has worked with several companies, while Debbie, originally from South Carolina, became a nurse and hospice administrator. After retiring to the Bates Boy Farm in Byrdstown, they enjoy country life with various animals. In retirement, they actively give back to the community, with Gary as vice president of the Byrdstown-Pickett County Chamber of Commerce. They participate in local events, demonstrating their commitment to investing in and supporting Pickett County.

PUTNAM COUNTY

MAE FOWLER



Mae Fowler is a key volunteer for The Putnam County Farm Day, a major educational event in Tennessee that involves more than 1,000 students and relies on 250 volunteers. Known for her calm leadership, Mae manages 28 learning stations focused on agriculture. With a background as a teacher and administrator in the Putnam County School System, she has directed the event for eight years, enhancing instruction for first graders about food and resource management. Mae also volunteers with the Heart of the Cumberland grief center and counsels children in local schools. She and her husband, Doug, operate their family farm in Putnam County and have three grown children and seven grandchildren.

SMITH COUNTY

JOHNNY RAY BROWN



Johnny Ray Brown leads the Smith County Youth Mentorship Program, which addresses youth addiction and equips participants with principles for personal success. The program focuses on character building, life skills, and fostering hope, especially for children from high-risk households. It connects home, school, and community, providing consistent mentors who model stability and accountability. Currently, it supports 20-25 elementary-aged children weekly, leading to positive outcomes like reduced negative behaviors, better food stability, improved confidence, and support in breaking substance abuse cycles.

VAN BUREN COUNTY

DARLEEN HUNTER



Darleen Hunter, UCHRA Van Buren County Coordinator and Senior Center Director, is recognized for her exceptional leadership and dedication to the community. She manages the Van Buren County Activity Center, ensuring it serves as a supportive space for local seniors. Her compassion is evident in her efforts to provide hot meals, essential resources, health programs, and social opportunities, significantly enhancing the quality of life for the county's aging population and positively impacting community partnerships.

WARREN COUNTY

GARY PRATER



Gary Prater, a Warren County farmer and entrepreneur, recently celebrated his 70th birthday. He manages 1,000 acres with his brother and owns Prater's Barbecue, established 30 years ago with his late wife, Phyllis. Prater is active in community service, serving as a County Commissioner for 28 years and participating in various organizations. After losing Phyllis in a tragic accident, he created the Phyllis Prater Memorial Scholarship Fund, awarding scholarships to local students. He organized the first Phyllis Prater Steak Cookoff, raising \$28,000 for the fund, and plans to continue this annual event to honor her memory and support higher education for students.

WHITE COUNTY

JAMES DOUGLAS



James Douglas, former Manager of Bridgestone Firestone Centennial Wilderness, spent more than 34 years with the organization. A Navy and Coast Guard veteran, he began his state career in 1987 and joined the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency in 1989. Under his leadership, the Wilderness expanded from 4,000 to 20,000 acres, adding trails, campsites, and wildlife fields. Douglas received multiple awards, including Regional Wildlife Officer of the Year. He has also significantly contributed to his community through church construction, coaching, and preserving local history. In retirement, he remains active in his church and continues his commitment to service and conservation.

WORKING TOGETHER

As we reflect on another year of service and influence in the Upper Cumberland, we are reminded that our most significant accomplishments arise from collaboration, commitment, and a unified vision. UCDD and UCHRA remain dedicated to enhancing communities, supporting individuals, and creating opportunities that elevate the quality of life across our 14-county region.

Looking forward, we anticipate exciting initiatives and new opportunities that will emerge, all founded on robust partnerships, innovative ideas, and the steadfast dedication of the individuals and organizations we serve. Together, we will continue to foster meaningful change, empower our communities, and illuminate the limitless potential of the Upper Cumberland.

Join us in making a difference in the Upper Cumberland! Whether you are an individual, an organization, or a community leader, your participation is vital in helping us create impactful change, strengthen communities, and support the residents of our 14-county region. Contact our team today to learn more about our programs, share your insights, or explore partnership opportunities.



TOGETHER, WE CAN
CONTINUE TO CULTIVATE
A STRONGER, MORE
VIBRANT UPPER
CUMBERLAND FOR **ALL.**



UCDD** Upper Cumberland
Development District
931-432-4111 | www.ucdd.org

UCHRA** Upper Cumberland
Human Resource Agency
931-528-1127 | www.uchra.org

Stay connected with UCDD and UCHRA by following us on your preferred social media platforms to get the latest updates about our agencies.





Tennessee's Upper Cumberland
