



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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United Way of Central Alabama Celebrates the Past, Plans for the Future

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – Over 3,500 supporters attended United Way’s Centennial Celebration on Saturday, June 24 at City Walk in Birmingham. Over 40 United Way partner agencies supported the event with displays of their services offered.

The event began with the kickoff of UWCA’s Pacesetter Campaign, a yearly predecessor to their annual fall campaign that lays an important foundation and sets an enthusiastic tone for United Way’s larger campaign held in the fall. The ceremony opened with a song produced by Dr. Henry Panion, III, entitled, “What a Difference,” co-written by Ruth Elaine Schram and Dr. Panion. Rebekah Elgin-Council, UWCA Pacesetter Chair and Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, announced a goal of \$11 million, which will help those in need in Central Alabama and allow UWCA to continue serving as the community’s safety net in times of crisis and as a forward-looking problem solver.

“We are challenging more than 100 pacesetter companies to come together, live united and show what a difference we can make to individuals in our community by raising \$11 million,” said Elgin-Council. “Reaching the goal will be instrumental to funding critical programs, empowering individuals and creating lasting change; let’s continue to grow our community and set the pace for our 100th year campaign because our community is depending on us.”

At the Centennial Celebration, UWCA also announced the goal of increasing its endowment to \$100 million through the “[Forever United Campaign](#),” its strategic plan for the next century to ensure the community’s safety net of services continues to thrive during the next 100 years.

“Our United Way of Central Alabama has been the forefront of driving positive change, tackling social issues and uniting our communities through a common goal of fighting for health, education and financial stability for every person in our community throughout the years,” said Dow Briggs, M.D., UWCA’s 2023 Campaign Chairman. “Our plan for United Way and our

partner agencies is to provide services for more than 1,200 locations throughout Central Alabama to ensure that communities with limited resources gain the access they need to food, housing and health care.”

The Centennial Celebration was led by a team of incredible volunteers:

- 100th Anniversary Chair – Craft O’Neal, O’Neal Industries
- Centennial Celebration Chairs – Paula Drake, Regions, and Pam Cook, Coca-Cola Bottling Co. United
- Anniversary Dinners Chair – Mallie Ireland, former UWCA Board Chairman
- Forever United Campaign Chair – Jeff Stone, Brasfield & Gorrie
- Community Projects Chairs – Krystal Drummond, Drummond Company, Inc. and Kimberly Jackson, Southern Co.

The celebration included food trucks, a children’s activity area, interactive games by Centennial sponsors and a 50-ft. walkthrough timeline display of United Way’s 100-year history, as well as musical performances by Moon Taxi, Fly Dave and the Party Rockers, Act of Congress and many others.

Over the past century, UWCA’s fundraising impact has increased to more than \$38 million, supporting over 100 programs, services and initiatives across a six-county region. Thanks to companies like Coca-Cola United, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, Regions and many other dedicated sponsors, UWCA was able to host the community-wide Centennial Celebration at City Walk BHAM to show its gratitude to supporters in a meaningful and joyful way. Special T-shirts were designed by Bethanne Hill to commemorate the centennial and help raise funds.

Additionally, as a commemoration of UWCA’s 100-year legacy, it will be dedicating a community project in each of the six counties it serves. These projects will focus on the construction of community parks with the goal of building long-term partnerships and creating sustainable resources the community can enjoy for years to come. UWCA has already broken ground on the Jefferson County project at Franklin Park in Tarrant and is working closely with county and local leadership to identify opportunities to tailor each project to the specific community.

***Editor’s Note:** [Click here](#) for photos and videos from the event. Please attribute photos to Cathey Sigmon Ritter.

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United Way of Central Alabama serves Jefferson, Shelby, Walker, Blount, St. Clair, and Chilton counties by providing solutions for the most critical needs in the community. Through partner agencies and community initiatives, UWCA improves lives and community conditions by building and mobilizing resources. United Way fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community. For more information, visit www.uwca.org.