

Our mission is to deliver educational and cultural programs to children, families, and communities, primarily in Southern Appalachia. We serve by sharing and spreading centuries-old traditions of song and story.



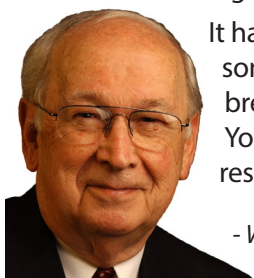
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MILK & HONEY NEWSLETTER

A Taste of Milk & Honey

O, FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES and then I could express the gratitude of 1,000 children who say to you, "Thank you." It is important, whether you gave little or much, that you know you have blessed children you probably will never meet. I want you to know that last August most of these children came into Head Start classrooms afraid, silent, or crying, hiding behind Mother. This month they ran out of those rooms laughing and singing. Thanks to you, they have songs to sing all summer, stories to tell all summer, and books to take to their parents with a new request: "Read me a story."

Not all the beautiful changes in the children are due to our program; of course not. Most, but not all, come from homes that are poor in things but rich in love. The Head Start schools have good teachers who care for the children. But the Head Start programs are strapped for funds and word out of Washington brings the tragic news of further cuts. Budgets are trim, with no funds for programs of enrichment --- music, art, storytelling, and dance. And so, through The Craddock Center, you come into their classrooms singing, dancing, telling stories. You have enriched their lives, and if the statistics are to be believed, you have improved their chances of success in school and in life. So, thank you. I hope you will join us in August to begin a new year.



It has been my pleasure to visit some of the schools. To be sure, with some children there is evidence of physical and emotional abuse, and it breaks your heart. But the overwhelming experience is one of delight. You look at each new face and say, "This is a child of God. I see a striking resemblance."

- Written by Dr. Fred Craddock, May 2005

SPRING CAMPAIGN 2023

This year our annual Spring Campaign celebrated the resiliency of The Craddock Center and its donors, supporters, volunteers, and staff. We successfully navigated the challenges presented by the pandemic and are now well positioned for the future.

The Campaign came to a close on April 30th, the birthday of Dr. Craddock. Thank you for your response and generosity!

You can still help us!

Continue your support of the work of The Craddock Center by making a gift. Your gift will: put books into the hands of the little ones that so need them, enable us to continue our programming into the pre-K and Head Start classrooms every week, support the work of the Living Room program to provide household furnishings to those in need, and provide Craddock Cares kits to first responders to help those in crisis.

Because of your support and generosity, The Craddock Center has been able to make a difference in the lives of the 1,100 children we support each year in the Pre-K and Head Start programs in southern Appalachia. During the last 22 years, The Craddock Center has served 27,000 children, given away over 100,000 new children's books, and provided 11,000 hours of programming.

Thank you again for your continued generosity that enables The Craddock Center to be able to make a difference for the children, families, and communities in southern Appalachia.

From the Executive Director

A couple of months ago The Craddock Center participated in an event at the University of North Georgia, Blue Ridge, which showcased the volunteer opportunities available to residents in our community.

The Craddock Center table highlighted how volunteers help with our programs. There were also knitted caps with the goal of enticing knitters to make caps for our children and there were examples of the wooden toys that are donated to The Craddock Center from the toymakers in Houston, Texas and East Lake, Florida.



A young man stopped at our table and pointed at one of the wooden toys and said, "I have one of those!" This young man was a freshman in college. I asked him how he got the toy. With a big smile on his face, he said "15 years ago I was a student in the Gilmer County Pre-K program, and it was given to me then." He then said, "I still have the toy on my bookshelf in my bedroom."

I immediately got goosebumps on my arms!

Does what we do matter? Does what we do have a long-lasting impact on the children? I wholeheartedly say YES!

Because of your support of our programs, you are creating long-lasting memories for the children we serve!

Because of your support, we are having long-lasting positive impacts on these children!

Cub Scouts – Spring NOVA Event Uncovers the Past

The Boy Scouts of America developed the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) Nova Awards program to excite and expand a sense of wonder in their Scouts. By collaborating with an adult mentor, the various modules allow the scouts to explore the basic principles of STEM and discover how fun and fascinating STEM can be.



This event, held on April 15th, focused on helping the scouts explore the wonders of archaeology. The activities for this NOVA event were designed to help the scouts study the human past by recovering and analyzing materials that people left behind.

During the event, the scouts explored the differences between physical remains, artifacts, and ecofacts. As they enjoyed fun activities throughout the day, the scouts examined archaeological evidence left by prehistoric people. They learned an artifact is any object made by a human being and it usually refers to an object that has cultural or historical interest.

The scouts received awards, pins, and badges to celebrate their accomplishments and completing the activities.

The day concluded with dinner and a movie at The Craddock Center.



Celebrate

National Volunteer Week

April 16-22, 2023

Volunteers make the ORDINARY Extraordinary

Celebrating Our Volunteers!

The week of April 16th was National Volunteer Week. This week gave The Craddock Center a unique chance to stop and reflect on the power of the contribution and the profound impact our volunteers make on the children and families in southern Appalachia.

The hard work of our volunteers helps build a future that is even brighter than before and, through their dedication, they help shape the lives of children now and for generations to come. Their service will continue to make an impact that is felt for a lifetime.

The Craddock Center invites our volunteers to spend a few moments to take a good look in the mirror. See the kindness, enthusiasm, and generosity that it takes to make a difference. See how you are transforming lives, inspiring others, and helping create a better future for all.

Thank you for your ongoing, selfless service. We value you, your dedication, and your belief in the power of the programs of The Craddock Center to make our communities a better place.



INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST PROGRAM!

SMART BABIES!



Imagine for a moment that you are a five-year-old child. You enter kindergarten on the first day of school and quickly realize that other children know and do things you cannot. (And yes, children at this age do realize this!) You try hard but always seem to be behind. The teacher provides extra help when possible. Sometimes you are sent to a special teacher for help. But the school work still seems so hard, and you are still behind. Repeat this in 1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade, 4th grade, and every grade thereafter. You feel like a failure and want to give up. You learn to hate school. Finally, you just drop out of school. Typically, by the 10th grade. And you know that college will never be in your future. An incredibly sad story but unfortunately true.

The Craddock Center has decided to be proactive! We want to prevent children from experiencing this disappointment of being behind when they start kindergarten and continuing throughout their school careers. Our research has shown that the parent is the first and best teacher for ages 0-3. Most parents want to be that great first teacher, but they don't know how. Our new program, 'Smart Babies' will teach them how. We will provide them with the tools and knowledge to become great teachers for their children.

Smart Babies has a curriculum! We have chosen Ready for Kindergarten as the curriculum for our program. In February, two representatives from The Children's Reading Foundation came to The Craddock Center and presented a mock workshop for three board members and our Executive Director. They explained the program, shared materials, and answered our many questions. Those in attendance unanimously decided this program would meet and exceed our needs in developing workshops for parents of children, ages 0-3, to become the best first teacher for their babies.

The Guiding Principles of this program are:

- Honor parents as their child's most influential and most loved teacher.
- Foster effective early-learning experiences for children birth to age 5.
- Instill children with a joy and zest for learning that lasts a lifetime.
- Build relationships between parent, child, family, school, and community.*

Each year, parents will attend at least three workshops designed to teach them effective, age-specific, methods to help their baby's mind develop. The parents will be provided with appropriate tools, toys, books, and given suggestions on using these tools with their children. Reading with their children will be encouraged.

Many targets, such as language and literacy, math and reasoning, and social and emotional learning* will be covered in the program.

Stay tuned! In the next newsletter we will tell you more about these workshops. We will be busy this summer as we continue to plan and develop the program with the goal of launching workshops this fall.

DID YOU KNOW? *

40%

40% of children walk into kindergarten already one to three years behind.

71%

71% of children who start kindergarten behind are still behind in the 5th grade.

2%

Students who start Kindergarten below grade level have less than a 2% chance of attending post high school education.

We at The Craddock Center were shocked by these statistics. We knew we could not ignore this. So, we got busy.

FIRST

We researched the two closest counties to The Craddock Center, Fannin, and Gilmer, to see if any organization was addressing this issue. The answer was no.

SECOND

We researched what was going on in our state. Fortunately, awareness in this area appears to be growing but no definitive plans are in place.

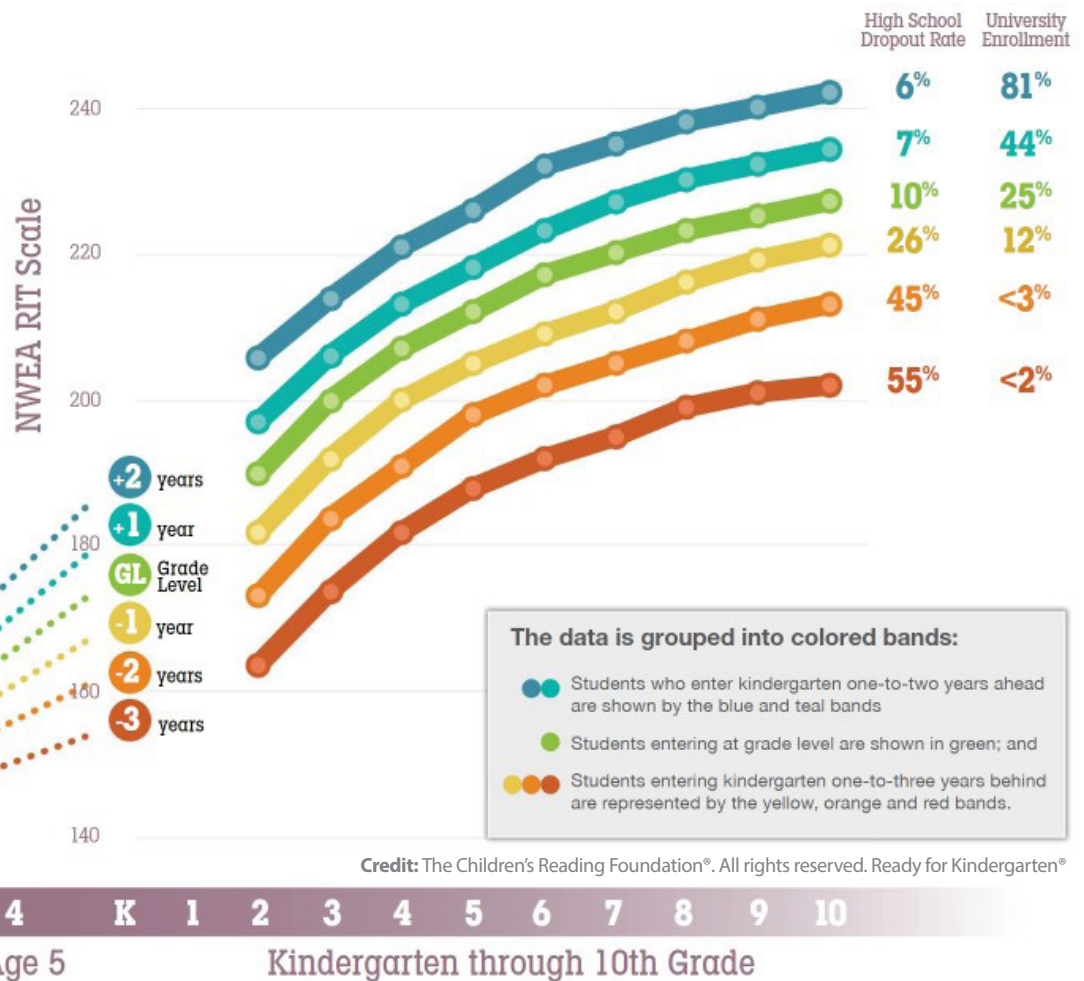
THIRD

We researched effective programs being utilized in the nation.

Our research showed that the parent was the child's first teacher. But we also found that some parents do not have the knowledge or tools to fully help develop their child's mind. Since learning in the first five years is at a speed unmatched by any other time in life, the knowledge and tools must be provided to these parents. The Craddock Center hopes to do exactly that.

The First Five Years Impacts Success in School and Life

- The **NWEA RIT SCALE** measures and compares academic achievement and growth. 240 is typical score for reading.
- The **rainbow-colored circles indicate the number of grade level years the child is ahead or behind when entering kindergarten.** Following the same-colored line through the child's education (Kindergarten through 10th grade) to see the high school dropout rate % and university enrollment % for that child.



THOSE STATISTICS. THEY ARE HAUNTING!

40% of children start kindergarten behind and most never catch up!

SPRING ARTS IN THE PARK MAY 27 & 28, 2023



Celebrating Children at the Spring Arts in the Park – Blue Ridge, GA

On Saturday 5/27 and Sunday 5/28, the yellow tent for The Craddock Center was visible from the hillsides around downtown Blue Ridge. The Craddock Center was once again excited to be a part of the Spring Arts in the Park to celebrate our work and the children we serve.

Thanks to our volunteers, we raised a lot of money for new books, created more awareness about the work of The Craddock Center, and most importantly...we gave away hundreds of books to children attending the festival.

Thanks to our volunteers Beth Roberts, Laura Jensen, Lyn Thaxton, Ellen Carpenter, Corrina Luce, Patti O'Dell, and Joseph Cantwell. Special thanks to Robin Massaro and Sue Hriljac for their planning and organization to support our participation in the event!

Come visit us at the Fall Arts in the Park in Blue Ridge on Saturday 10/14 and Sunday 10/15.



Look at these Children!

The Craddock Center is working with a local media company to create a new video for our website and marketing. Our current video is six years old.

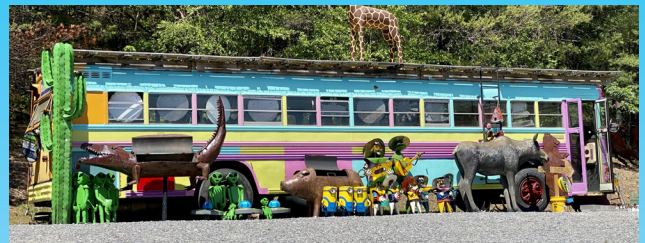
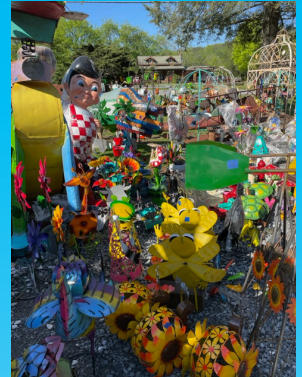
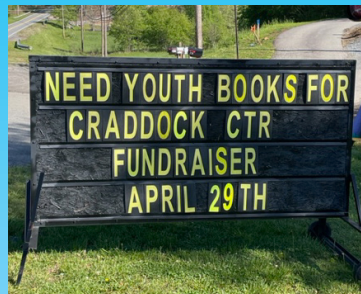
East Fannin Elementary School Pre-K, in Blue Ridge, GA, eagerly accepted our invitation to participate. We were in the classroom on April 28th for our second video shoot.

I wish everyone who supports the work of The Craddock Center could see these children in person. Since that is not possible, I took some pictures while the Children's Enrichment Program was taking place to share with you.

Look at their smiles! Look at how captivated they are with the storytelling!



Thanks to the Zoo... Groovy Yard Art!



On Saturday, April 29th, The Zoo...Groovy Yard Art, a wonderful outdoor metal art business in Mineral Bluff, GA, hosted a fundraiser event for The Craddock Center. They donated 20% of their sales for the day which resulted in a donation of \$600!!

They also collected 242 books from their customers during the month of April. That is a record for any business that has collected books on behalf of The Craddock Center! In addition, their customers donated 12 new toddler-age toys that will be used for the upcoming Smart Babies program.

It was a fun day and customers donated an additional \$131 dollars at our table setup for the event. We also gave away 45 activity books and crayons to the children. Thanks to Marcia Lehman, one of our Board Members, for helping with this event.

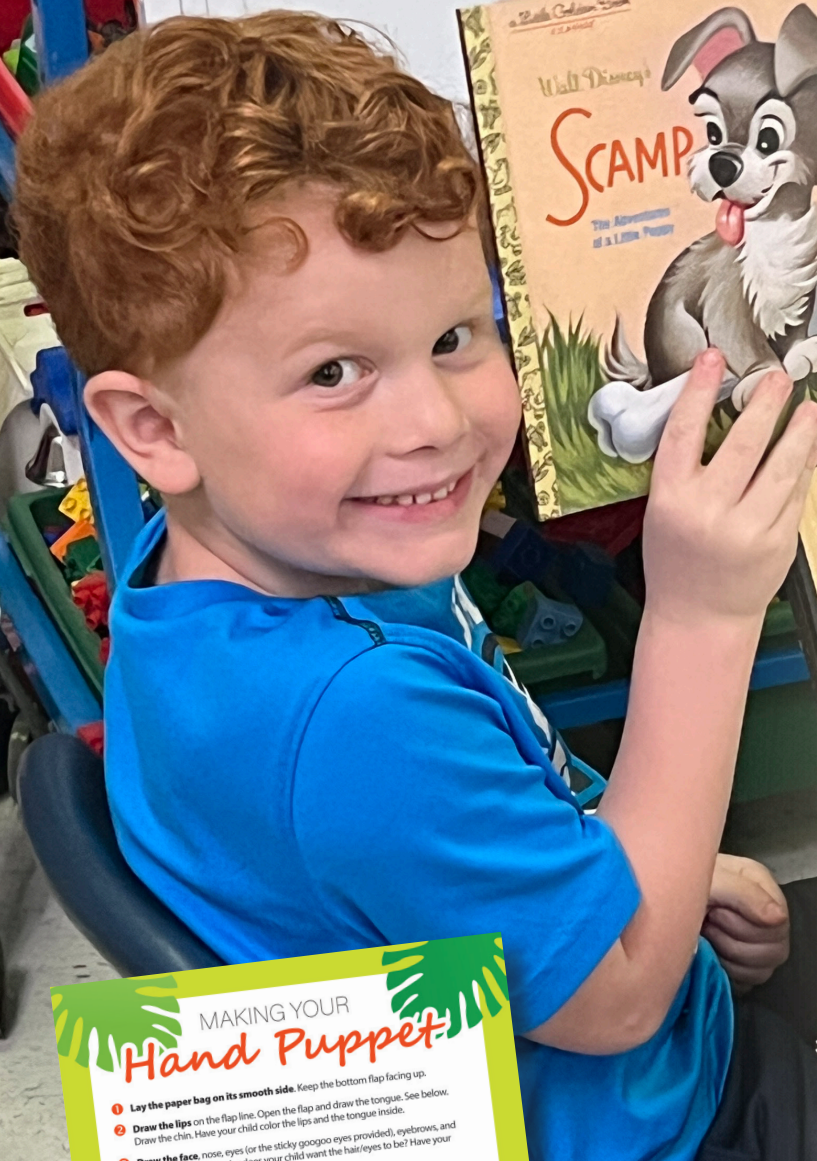
The Craddock Center is so blessed to have people like Wanda and Steve, the owners of The Zoo...Groovy Yard Art, that care about our community!

DONATE NOW

You can support
The Craddock Center
NOW! Just hover over the code (below)
with your phone camera and then
select the "Craddock Center" prompt.
Thank You for your generosity!



Summer Send Off 2023



*"Thank you guys for all
you do for our students!"*

Holly Cook, Union County
Elementary Pre-K

*"Our children love The
Craddock Center! We
truly appreciate you
continuing to partner with
us for these kiddos."*

Stacey Trammell,
Lumpkin County Head Start

*"Thank you and your
program for all you do for
the kids. They enjoy it."*

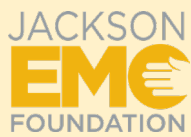
Tasha Williamson,
Ranger Elementary Pre-K



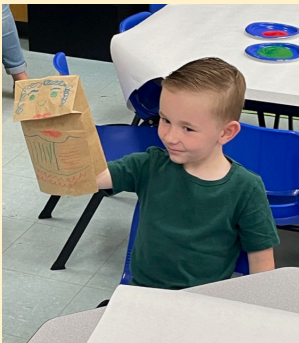
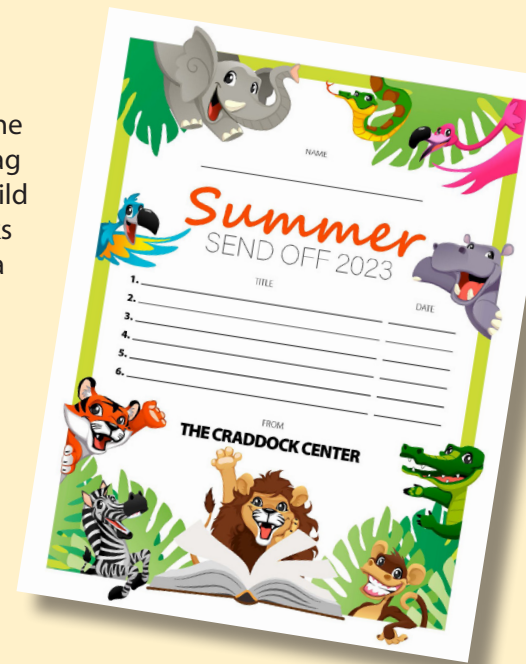
Summer Send Off 2023

On May 10th, The Craddock Center celebrated 'Summer Send Off 2023'. This is the third year for one of our newest programs. Each of our 1,140 children received a bag of goodies as their pre-K and Head Start programs ended for the Summer. Each child received a brand-new 'Golden Classic' book, a book reading log to record the books they read during the Summer, stickers, and arts & crafts supplies needed to make a couple of hand puppets.

The goal of this program to provide our children an opportunity to continue learning even as their formal learning programs suspend for the Summer. Pre-k literacy gains can easily be lost over the summer, especially by emerging readers who are still building foundational literacy skills. The Summer reading achievement gap between pre-K and kindergarten can be closed by a child reading 4-5 books during the Summer.



Part of the funding for this program is made possible by a grant from the Jackson EMC Foundation. Thanks also to the many donors who responded to our 'Amazon wish list' and provided the books and supplies needed for the bags!



Thanks to the volunteers from Due West United Methodist Church (Alyssa & Zack Stire, Sam & Taylor Ginglesberger, and Kari Leth) and Anita Hardy for packing the goodie bags!

Also, thanks to the following volunteers for delivering the bags to the children: Ellen Carpenter, Pam Hurd, Carolyn Lakes & Larry Brannon, and Joe Cantwell!!

A Journey to Action...

On May 11th, The Craddock Center hosted an event for the Family Connection organizations of Fannin, Gilmer, and Pickens Counties. The event, 'A Journey to Action: Meeting Needs through Systems Change', was attended by 32 people from many different organizations that support our communities. The goal of the event was to identify ways by which we can reduce barriers and challenges as we help families in crisis meet the needs in our counties. The long-term goal of the event is to increase our ability to advocate for systems change that improves resilience and impacts long-term outcomes for children, families, and communities.





On April 28, 2023, The Craddock Center participated in the Gilmer County Family Literacy Night. During the event, The Craddock Center gave away 200 activity books and crayons to children of all ages. We also had a ring toss game for the children to play and win prizes.

The event, hosted by the Gilmer County School System, drew over 600 children and parents. 43 local organizations and businesses participated in the event to promote literacy and provide a fun evening of games and activities for the local children.



Thank You Anonymous!



During the year we receive many monetary donations, books, and hats from many anonymous donors. **Thank you for your generous gifts!** We wish we knew who you are so that we could thank you. Please know that your anonymous gifts are valued and appreciated, and they help us bring joy to the many children that we serve. Thank you!

Recruiting Board Members

Are you looking for a rewarding experience?

A new opportunity to give back to your community?

Do you have a passion for children and literacy?

The Craddock Center is looking for motivated individuals to serve on its Board of Directors.

Most of us reach a point in our lives where we need a new challenge. What better way to introduce a new challenge than to inspire change by serving on a nonprofit Board such as with The Craddock Center. As a Board Member, you will witness first-hand the social impact of our programs for the children and families in our community while offering advice, oversight, and support.

Nonprofits, such as The Craddock Center, lead by fulfilling our mission and work to make an impact on the children and families of southern Appalachia. We are looking for members of our community who want to lead with us and bring your skills and expertise to make a difference in our community!

If you have an interest, please contact Kirk Cameron at 706-632-1772 for more information.



Friends of The Craddock Center

The Craddock Center cannot do what we do for the children and families of Southern Appalachia without the financial support of our donors. **Thank you and recognition to those individuals, organizations, and foundations for their generosity in supporting The Craddock Center since August 1, 2022 through May 31, 2023.**

\$15,000+ William B. Orkin Foundation, Inc.

\$10,000+

Warren and Augusta Hume Foundation
Gary and Nancy Fayard

Frances Wood Wilson Foundation, Inc.
Helen M. Lewis

\$5,000+

Elizabeth Roberts King Endowment
Mrs. Nettie Craddock
Evelyn Mitchell

Piedmont Charitable Foundation, Inc.
The George Link Jr. Charitable Trust

\$3,000+

Susan Elliott-Bryan
Faith, Hope, & Charity Recycle Store, Inc.
Nora Roberts Foundation

Christian Church Foundation
Jerry and Faye Hardiman

\$2,000+

Big Canoe Chapel Women's Fellowship
Sally C. Anderson
Church of the Good Samaritan
Ray and Muriel Larson Gift Fund
Marcia Lehman
Milly Hastings and Steve Stevens

John and Dee Craddock
Sarah Allred
Bev Cook
Ellijay Lions Club
Gilmer County Family Connection

\$1,000+

Earline Crooke
Diane Bales
Network for Good
New Hope Christian Church
Robin Massaro
Kirk Cameron and Michael Kilpatrick
Patti O'Dell

Amicalola EMC Trust
August Fifth Foundation
Blue Ridge Kiwanis
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Hartwell and Susan Dew

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JT Digital Media
Marlowe Kennedy
Linda Kliros
Ronald and Bette Jensen
Gerald and Joan Lord

Carol G. McGinnis
Marvin and Eileen McRoberts
Clarence and Gwendolyn Seeliger
Southstate Bank Blue Ridge
United Community Banks

\$500+

Ronald and Bette Jensen
Rebecca and Daniel Doster
Pledging Foundation
Steven and Annette McBrayer
St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church

Jim McLean
Judith Clairmont and Timothy Vanduser
Sherry and Bill Echelberger
The Zoo Groovy Art
Patrick and Debra Hrdy

Leslie and Susan Spencer
Jewish Congregation of Blue Ridge
Blue Ridge United Methodist Church
Rebecca Bunton
Ken Cissna

Gordon Hellman
Nancy Sargent McGrath
James Shelton
Ginger Walker
Friends of Hidden Lake

Up to \$500

Thursday Night AA
Anne Haltiwanger
Jeffrey Welch
Tommy and Cathy Archibald
Alight Solutions
Willis and Leona DuVall
Wayne Everbach
Donna Lee Fowlie
Vivian Guthrie
Log Cabin Community Church
Jack Nolen
Jerald and Aundre Rookstool
William Donovan
Paul H. Anderson
Due West United Methodist Church
William and Connie English
Amy McChesney
Carol Moulder
Gloria Rippy
Judy Weiland
Albert Toth
Mary Beussee
Maureen and Daniel Hicks
Kenneth Irby
Celine Melton
Ted and Cindy Minick
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Eugene and Lois Watson
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Jerrice and Dennis Barrett
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Lisa Dick
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Meribah Elliott
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Gary Schneeberg
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Gail Minnich Watson
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