

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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186 Fred Craddock Drive  
Cherry Log, GA 30522  
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craddockcenter@tds.net  
craddockcenter.org

## A Taste of Milk & Honey

Let me recommend that you spend some time now and then remembering your childhood, from your earliest recollection through elementary school years. Retrieve from your memory how you dressed, what you ate, what you played and with whom, your room, your siblings, your parents, going to church, teachers you loved and why, teachers you feared and why, what made you happy, what made you sad, what you wanted to be when you grew up. You get the idea. Revisit specific persons, places, events.

**Why do this?** There may be some pain in it. Of course there may be, but you will understand better why you are as you are. Better self-understanding makes possible better understanding of others and with that more patience, more kindness, more gratitude. **In fact, you may be more comfortable SAYING YES to invitations to serve others, especially children who will someday remember you with fondness and gratitude.**



At The Craddock Center we believe strongly that attention and encouragement from one adult outside the family makes a major difference in the life of a child.

Remember?

- Written by Dr. Craddock November 2004

## From the Executive Director

November 2, 2025, marked a meaningful milestone for me — five years as Executive Director of The Craddock Center. When I stepped into this role, I was driven by a deep belief: that every child deserves the chance to succeed in school. Today, I am humbled by how far we've come — and energized by how far we can still go together.

Over the past five years, via our Children's Enrichment Program and Smart Babies, we have strengthened partnerships with schools, libraries, churches, other non-profits, and civic organizations to promote literacy and learning in our community. And we have done it all through the steadfast support of our volunteers, advocates, donors, and families who share in our mission.

Our work has never been simply about instruction — it is about empowering futures. Every story read aloud, every book in the hands of our children, and every family that discovers a new love for reading and teaching, reflects a brighter tomorrow for our youngest neighbors. Literacy and learning are gifts that open doors, and we are proud to be part of that life-changing journey.

As I celebrate this five-year milestone, my gratitude is immense. To our board, whose guidance has shaped our growth. To our staff, who pour their hearts into their work every day. To our volunteers and supporters, whose generosity makes our mission possible. And to the children and families we serve — you are the reason we do what we do.

The story of The Craddock Center is still being written, and the best chapters are yet to come. With continued collaboration and vision, we will reach more children, amplify more voices, and ensure that every child has the tools they need to thrive.

**Thank you for an incredible five years. Here's to the future — filled with new words, new stories, and endless possibilities.**



Happy & Hope...We Deliver



## *New Books, Knitted Hats and Gloves! An Annual Tradition of Love Continues*

Winters in the mountains can be cold, and many of the children we serve do not have adequate clothing for the cold winter months. A warm, knitted hat helps tremendously in preventing loss of critical body heat in the very young.

On November 12, 2025, volunteers from The Craddock Center delivered new children's books, hand-made knitted hats, and gloves to the 1,178 little ones we serve. The area we serve consists of nine (9) counties including Dawson, Gilmer, Fannin, Lumpkin, Pickens, Towns, and Union Counties in Georgia, Polk County in Tennessee, and Cherokee County in North Carolina.

As the children experience the joy of these gifts, they also receive messages of love, hope, and happiness. Our mission of "Happy & Hope. We Deliver" is a mission in action that comes alive each day through the work of The Craddock Center.

**Thanks to volunteers for packing the hats, gloves, and books for delivery:**  
**Kimberly Anna-Soisson, Lynn Higginbotham, Elder Taylor, Elder Neumaker, and Elder Olsen from the Church of Latter-Day Saints.**

**Thanks to the following volunteers for delivering these gifts to the children:**  
**Carolyn Lakes, Beth Roberts, Cathy Cavagnaro, and Joe Cantwell.**

**Thanks also to the following knitters for supporting this wonderful annual event and providing warmth to our special kiddos: the Fiber Arts Group of the Blue Ridge Mountain Arts Association, the Encouragement Project, Peachtree Christian Church, Bascomb UMC United Women in Faith, Mary Flynn, Jackie Mann, Lynda Hyde, Betty Schaffer, Marcia Congdon, Janet Elder, Cindy Minick, Jane Carwell, Marilyn Carson, Ann Honeycutt, Carol Clark, Big Canoe Knitting Group, Cheryl Murray, Anne Patrick, Courtney O'Rourke, Joyce McClure, Linda Montgomery, and Lynn Starr.**





## FEEDBACK FROM TEACHERS

"The kids love their books, hats and gloves. Thank you all so much!"

Tasha Williamson, Teacher,  
Ranger Elementary Pre-K

"Thank you so much. We greatly appreciate all the love and support from you and the Craddock Center."

Tonya Kellogg, Director,  
Pickens Head Start

"Thank you for the gifts of hats, gloves, and books. The kids were very excited to get them."

Brittany Hoyt, Teacher,  
Peachtree Elementary Pre-K

"Please let everyone know how much we appreciate the hats, gloves and books! That was so kind and very needed! The kids loved them and were so proud of them!"

Katrina Kingsley, Director,  
Gilmer County Pre-K

"Thank you so much for these gifts! The students loved picking them out and getting to take them home!!!"

Holly Cook, Teacher,  
Union County Elementary Pre-K

"Thanks so much for all you guys do!!"

April DeHart, Director,  
Andrews Head Start





# The Craddock Center

for **CHILD**  
and **FAMILY**  
**ENRICHMENT**

CELEBRATING  
**25** years  
2001-2026

## SAVE THE DATE

June 13, 2026 at 6:30pm

# 25th Anniversary Gala

## *Songs & Stories 2026*

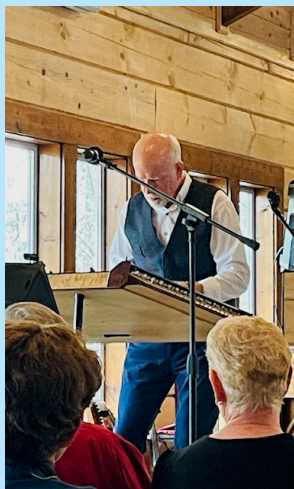
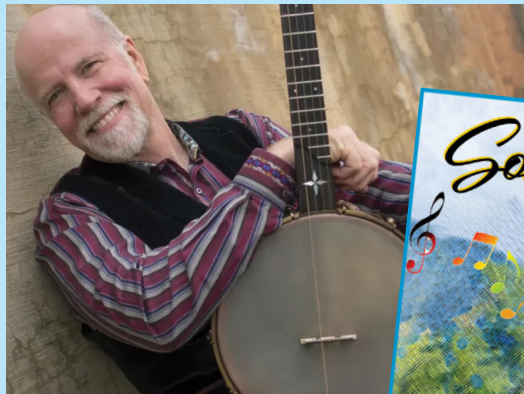
Songs & Stories returns to the Craddock Center on February 7, 2026!

Last year we were especially excited and honored that John McCutcheon, a world-traveled musician, songwriter, and folksinger, returned as the performer for this event. He thrilled our guests with beautiful folk music.

And Natalie Jones, one of our Arts Specialists, provided lively and humorous storytelling. She shared examples of both her storytelling work with children at our preschools and her personal stories crafted for grown-up audiences.

As always, admission was free, and our guests responded with very generous donations. The money raised will go towards the purchase of new books for the little ones we serve.

Songs & Stories was started by Dr. Fred Craddock over twenty years ago. He wanted something in the winter that people could enjoy. We offer an event that brings people together to have a fun winter afternoon highlighting the old Appalachian traditions of storytelling and folk music.







## Fannin County Earns Rural Community Award

Fannin County, one of the counties served by The Craddock Center, was named the Rural Community of the Year by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce in recognition of the community's commitment to quality growth and economic development.

The award was presented on October 1, 2025 during the Rural Awards Luncheon as part of the Rural Prosperity Summit.

Christie Gribble, President of the Fannin County Chamber of Commerce, submitted the nomination for the award. In the nomination, she recognized ten non-profits that serve Fannin County. The Craddock Center was one of the ten noted for the exemplary work done in serving the children and families of Fannin County through our Children's Enrichment Program, Smart Babies, Craddock Cares, and the Living Room.

Kirk Cameron (right), Executive Director, was in attendance with others from Fannin County to receive the award.



## 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!



## Celebrate National Family Literacy Month

National Family Literacy Month is celebrated during the month of November. This is an opportunity for families to learn and read together. It also celebrates the work literacy programs, such as those from The Craddock Center, do to empower families.

### Here are ways families can celebrate National Family Literacy Month every month of the year:

- Visit your local library with your family.
- Join and participate in a book club or start a book club. Make it fun and get creative with your book club meeting by having activities or serve food related to the books your group is reading. MAYBE GREEN EGGS AND HAM!!
- Attend a book festival together.
- Create a book exchange in your neighborhood.
- Set up a neighborhood 'Little Library'. Use a small container to house the books and protect them from the elements with a sign that reads, "Take a book, leave a book."
- Donate books. Everyone has at least a few books that they have read and that are now lying on a shelf someplace in their home waiting for eager eyes to read them again. Consider donating your gently used children's books to The Craddock Center or a local charity in your area.
- Share the love and joy of reading. Volunteer to read to patients in the hospital, to children in preschool, or to the elderly in a nursing facility.
- Discuss what you've read. Encourage your children to talk about what they have read.
- Read, read, and read some more. Read about any and everything that interests you. No matter what it may be, read for the enjoyment of reading.

**To honor and celebrate National Family Literacy Month, Charlie Paris, Chairman of the Gilmer County Board of Commissioners signed a proclamation on October 29, 2025 designating November as National Family Literacy Month in Gilmer County.**

The Times-Courier, the newspaper for Ellijay, Ga/Gilmer County also ran an article to support the proclamation and event.





## We Serve by Sharing – The Legacy Program of The Craddock Center

First, thank you for your support of the work of The Craddock Center.

Because of you, we **ARE** making a difference in the communities of southern Appalachia. The Craddock Center wants to continue to make a difference in the decades to come and beyond.

We offer the opportunity to participate in the Legacy Program of The Craddock Center - We Serve by Sharing. **"We Serve by Sharing"** is from The Craddock Center Mission Statement. **We serve the children and share our time, skills, talents, and money** to sustain the work and plan for and build for the future of The Craddock Center.

The Craddock Center has been serving the children and families in our communities for 25 years. We don't know what our communities will look like 25 years from now, but we have no doubt that what we do for the children will continue to be needed.

Please consider a planned gift to support and sustain the work of The Craddock Center. You can call The Craddock Center at 706-632-1772 to request a brochure.

**Thank you again for your support of The Craddock Center and thank you for your consideration on how you can support its future.**



*"You may be more comfortable SAYING YES to invitations to serve others, especially children who will someday remember you with fondness and gratitude."*

—Dr. Fred Craddock

**DONATE NOW**

You can support

**The Craddock Center**

1. Open camera
2. Scan code
3. Give now



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

## Craddock Cares

Wrapped in Hope & Love

### Do You Know About Craddock Cares?

Craddock Cares is an outreach program sponsored by The Craddock Center. Craddock Cares was started to support children, families, and the elderly who find themselves in emergency situations, displacements, and other significant crisis events.

Our Craddock Cares kits include selected items placed in 2-gallon, water-proof bags. The bags are designed to be easily carried by first responders (EMS, Police, Fire Departments) for emergency use when transporting or caring temporarily for children or adults in transition.

Other non-profits that serve the homeless community or women in crisis situations are also recipients of the Craddock Cares kits.

One Craddock Cares kit includes: a blanket, bottled water, stuffed animal, toothbrush and toothpaste, bar soap, wash cloth and hand towel, a children's toy, and a hat and gloves (winter months).

We gave away 93 kits to local first responders and other organizations last fiscal year.





## Our Toymaker Angels Bring Joy and Happiness

On Wednesday, December 10, 2025, volunteers from The Craddock Center delivered 1,178 hand-made wooden toys to the children in the pre-K and Head Start programs we support. We can do this because of the generosity of St. Luke's United Methodist Church Woodshop from Houston, TX, and the Toymakers of East Lake in Palm Harbor, FL. These two organizations have been supporting the children of The Craddock Center for many years. We also thank the Woodworkers Guild of Georgia, Daniel Doster and the Gwinnett Woodworker Association, Gordon Hellman and Gary Padgett for making toys for the children. Many of the teachers in the classrooms we support tell us the gifts of toys and books from The Craddock Center are the only gifts these children receive.

**Thanks to our volunteer elves Elder Olsen, Elder Taylor, and Elder Neumaker for packing the toys. And thanks to our delivery elves: Beth Roberts, Joe Cantwell, Cathy and Richard Cavagnaro, and Carolyn Lakes for taking the toys to the schools.**

### The Toymakers of East Lake

The Toymakers of East Lake have given away over 160,000 hand-made wooden toys since 2009. They are an outreach mission of East Lake United Methodist Church and are a 100% volunteer non-profit organization to make smiles one toy at a time. They produce and donate brightly painted, hand-made wooden toys to 51 agencies for sick and needy children in stressful environments.

In addition to making toys, they also source, repair, and recycle bicycles back into their community to needy children, returning veterans, and homeless working adults.

### The Woodshop of St. Luke's United Methodist Church

The Woodshop of St. Luke's has been making wooden toys for over 23 years and they give away four to five thousand toys each year. The Craddock Center was one of the first recipients of their toys. Their main goal is fellowship and giving to others.

## FEEDBACK FROM TEACHER FOR TOYS

"Thank you so much for the wooden toys for our pre-k students. They were all extremely excited to pick out their favorite one to keep."

Dianne Dale, Director, Milestones Learning Center

"Thanks for all that you do for our students it is very much appreciated."

Melissa Violet, Director, Dawson County Head Start

"Thank you so much for the wonderful toys! The children love them! Please send our deepest appreciation to those kind individuals who made such beautiful toys!"

Katrina Kingsley, Director, Gilmer County Pre-K





## Local Businesses Give Back!

The Craddock Center receives support from our volunteers, donors, foundations, churches, and many other organizations to make what we do possible. We also receive support from local businesses that want to give back. We want to recognize and express our gratitude to Three Rivers Junk Removal and Lowe's of East Ellijay!

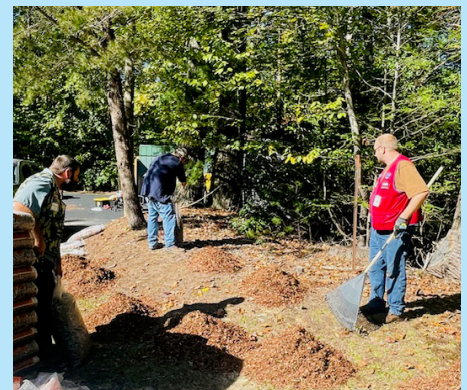
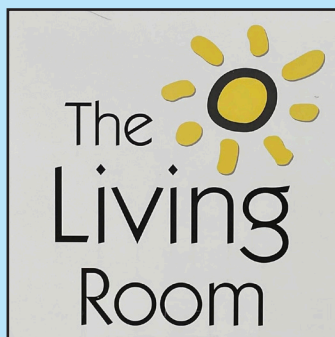


### SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

The Craddock Center thanks Jason and Three Rivers Junk Removal for supporting the work of the Living Room. Jason has delivered furniture and mattresses to support our work and he has also removed items that became damaged and would not be suitable for our clients. Thank you, James and Three Rivers!

### AN INCREDIBLE STORY OF GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY!

On October 10, 2025, 15 volunteers from the Lowe's in East Ellijay donated an amazing amount of time, work and materials at The Craddock Center: they rebuilt the shelves in our Living Room sheds, cleaned out the sheds, provided new bins for the items stored in the sheds, trimmed branches hanging over our entire parking lot, blew off leaves from the parking lot, put down a weed barrier and mulched all of our beds, sprayed all of our buildings and sheds with mold armor clean up, and performed a deep clean of our Meeting Building. Thanks to Brett Thompson, Store Manager, and his hard-working team for supporting the work of The Craddock Center! Lowe's gives back through a program called 'Lowe's Hometown'. This program provides Lowe's stores and their employees an opportunity to have an impact on the local community.





# SMART BABIES!



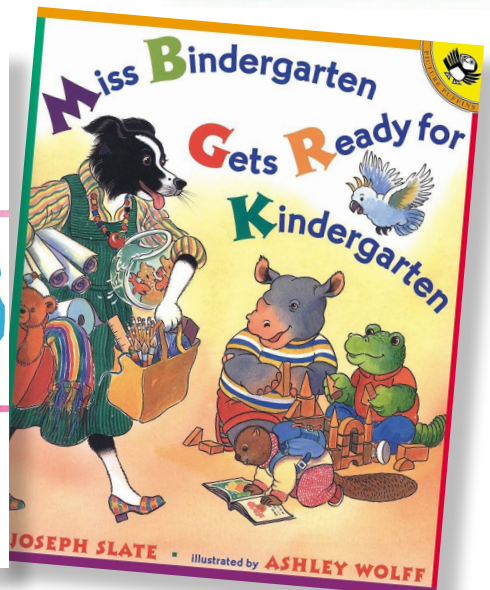
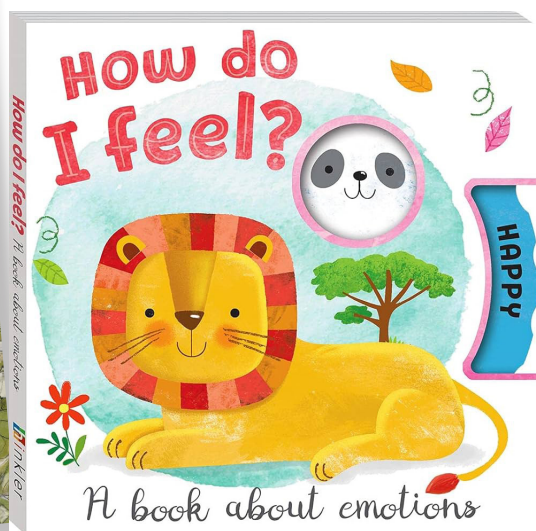
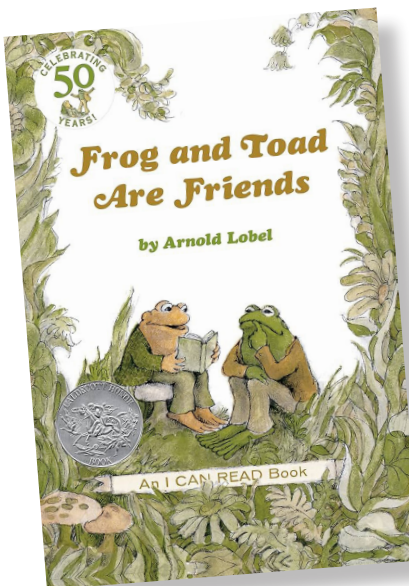
**Smart Babies**, a program provided by The Craddock Center, is designed to help parents of children ages 0-5, to be their child's best first teacher. We use the curriculum **Ready for Kindergarten**. Parents attend three 90-minute workshops per age level and go home with lots of knowledge, 3-4 age-appropriate toys and 3-5 age-appropriate books for their children. **The workshops are provided at no cost to the participants or the sponsoring schools or agencies!**

The curriculum focuses on three areas: Language and Literacy, Math and Reasoning, and Social and Emotional Learning. In the last newsletter, I discussed how we work with the parents to demonstrate to them the importance of developing math skills during these early years. This article will cover some of the activities and tools we use to aid the parents in enabling their children to be socially and emotionally ready for kindergarten.

Imagine a child entering kindergarten who doesn't know how to get along with others, is terrified of being away from mommy, can't follow simple directions, has a very short attention span, has difficulty managing emotions, and cannot be responsible for simple things like toileting or helping to clean up. This child is already at a disadvantage for learning. **Smart Babies** workshops deal with all of these areas.

Even at the age of 0-1, a baby can learn to focus, have eye contact, and take turns. The workshop facilitators encourage the parents to talk, talk, talk to their babies about anything and everything. Looking the baby in the eye and talking and then allowing the baby a turn to "talk" is so important. Coing, trying new sounds, etc., is the baby's method of communicating. So much is going on in these conversations. These are the building blocks. In the third workshop of 0-1, we encourage the parents to teach their baby sign language. Babies pick this up so quickly and it is a way they can express their needs before they can say full words. Click on the QR code to see how this is taught. It's fun!

Reading to a child can help cover so many skills: attention span, listening skills, learning new words, feeling secure, following directions, and dealing with emotions. We distribute books that deal with feelings and emotions, helping, and making friends.



Our curriculum, throughout all the levels 0-5, provides ideas, toys and books so that when a child starts kindergarten, they can "settle in" and get along with others. They will be able to focus on a task, follow 3-step directions, help clean up, and show kindness and empathy to others. All of these skills will help provide a smooth transition to school and learning.

**Bev Cook, Smart Babies Coordinator**



# Lives Touched, Stories Shared

We wanted to add a “human voice” to the Milk & Honey Newsletter by sharing real stories, in their own words, from our volunteers and donors to show the tangible impact of the work of The Craddock Center.

## Beth Roberts - Former Board Member

I am a former Early Childhood educator and my academic field was literacy education. I know the research on the importance of exposure to print and literacy experiences for very young children. And I know that young children who come to school without thousands of hours of spoken and written language exposure are at a serious disadvantage; it takes many years for those children to “catch up,” if indeed they ever do.

But just as important, as a parent and grandparent, and an avid reader myself, I know the rich joy that comes from exploring together worlds that are beyond our own small lives. I know that glimpsing into the lives of people we may never meet is a way to further understanding of all people and places.

For these reasons, and many others, it has been so gratifying to serve on the Board of The Craddock Center. The work that the Center does to enrich the literacy and arts experiences of children and families in southern Appalachia is a gift to those children and families, but it is also a gift to all of us who share the world we live in.

And the joy on a child’s face when the Center’s artists tell stories, and teach silly (learning) songs, and enchant with puppets, is surpassed only when a child is given her or his VERY OWN brand new book to take home and keep FOREVER! That’s the work of The Craddock Center, and I am so grateful to be a small part of it.

As the wise Dr. Seuss has told us, “The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” It’s a joy to go places with the children and families served by The Craddock Center.

## Bill and Sherry Echelberger

We choose to donate to The Craddock Center because we believe every child deserves access to joy, learning, and encouragement—regardless of their circumstances. The Craddock Center serves children through programs that deliver books, music, and storytelling. We live in a rural area where resources are limited so they reach children who need support the most. They particularly focus on early childhood, a critical stage for learning to love reading that will help them excel as they move on to higher education. They also provide everything at no cost to families or schools, so their efforts benefit children in all walks of life. Their staff is kind and compassionate. We give to The Craddock Center because what they do is making a difference in our community and because every child deserves the chance to thrive.



**We want to hear from You!** As a valued member of our community, your support is a testament to the work we do together. We would love to hear from you about what inspires you to support the work of The Craddock Center. Your testimonial would not only help us understand the reasons behind your commitment but also inspire others to join us in making a difference.

If you’re willing, we kindly ask you to share a few words about why you choose to support The Craddock Center. What motivated you to start supporting The Craddock Center? What impact do you feel your support has made?

Your story can be as brief or as detailed as you wish. We may share your testimonial in our communications, such as on our website, in newsletters, or on social media, to help show others the meaningful work we are doing together. If you prefer to remain anonymous, please let us know, and we will respect your privacy. Please contact Kirk Cameron, Executive Director at [kirk-craddock@tds.net](mailto:kirk-craddock@tds.net) with your questions or testimonial. Thank you for your unwavering support. Together, we are making a lasting difference.



# 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, from August 1, 2024, through December 31, 2025.**

**\$60,000+**

The Warren and Augusta Hume Foundation

**\$50,000+**

Regina Mitchell Diaz

**\$25,000+**

Thornwell Family Foundation

**\$20,000+**

Gary & Nancy Fayard

**\$19,000+**

Susan Elliott-Bryan

**\$18,000+**

Elizabeth Roberts King Endowment

**\$15,000+**

William B. Orkin Foundation, Inc.

**\$13,000+**

Heidi and Todd Ferraro

**\$10,000+**

The George Link Trust  
Nettie Craddock

**\$9,000+**

Jim and Carla Self

**\$7,000+**

Linda Kliros  
Piedmont Charitable Foundation  
Earline Crooke

**\$5,000+**

Hammill Family Foundation

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Friendship Christian Church  
Patti O'Dell

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**\$3,000+**

Dr. Rolf Meinhold  
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Sue and Mike Hriljac  
Blue Ridge Kiwanis  
Ray Larson

New Hope Christian Church

Faith Presbyterian Church  
Milly Hastings and Steve Stevens  
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Diane Bales and James Gibson

**\$2,000+**

North Georgia Community Foundation  
Paige Peugh  
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August Fifth Foundation, Inc.  
Big Canoe Women's Fellowship  
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Bill and Patty Crowl  
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Advisewell, Inc.  
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The Groovy Zoo  
AA Thursday Nights  
Michael Ellison  
Bev Cook  
Nancy Sargent McGrath  
First Christian Church of Decatur

America's RV Warranty  
Paul H. Anderson  
William Prather  
Steven and Annette McBrayer  
Gordon Hellman  
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**\$500+**

Christian Women's Fellowship  
Leslie and Susan Spencer  
Vivian Hays Guthrie Charitable Fund  
Sarah Allred  
Kirk Cameron and Michael Kilpatrick  
Vivian Guthrie  
Celine Melton

AA Tuesday Nights  
Tommy and Cathy Archibald  
Clarence and Gwendolyn Seeliger  
Beth Roberts  
Ken Cissna  
Ann H. Cook  
Willis and Leona DuVall

Clayton and Ethel Hock  
Larry King  
Carol G. McGinnis  
Jeffrey Ray  
Ted McMullan  
W. Arlyn and Susan Moulder  
Dianne D. Watson

Lydia Weathersby  
Cindy West  
Hodges Willis  
Jewish Congregation of Blue Ridge  
Anne Prince  
Wayne Everbach  
Linda and John Montgomery

**Up to \$499**

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Anne M. Haltiwanger  
Julie Weisberg  
Log Cabin Community Church  
Travis Bealmear  
Bascomb UMC United Women in Faith  
Steven Dennison  
Jack Nolen  
Albert Toth  
Phyllis and Joseph Adams  
David Akers  
Rebecca and Daniel Doster  
Fannin County Democratic Party  
Maureen and Dan Hicks  
William and Connie English  
David Jones  
Robert and Nancy Leitch  
Deborah Westcott  
Dairy Queen Ellijay  
Aight Solutions  
Blue Cabin Rentals  
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Louanne Watkins  
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Group of Rachel  
Milton and Janis Hill  
Amber Johnson

Marla Johnson  
Mary Elisabeth Jones  
Jane F. Keene  
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Edward Murrey, IV  
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Robert Smith, III MD  
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Karen Rosenberg  
Kenneth and Frances Strickland  
Johnny Wray  
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Kenneth Carlo  
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Ann Brayley  
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Karen Dorgan  
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Laura and Ryan Jensen  
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Sandy Springs Christian Church  
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Mountain Light Unitarian Universalist Church  
Pat and Debra Hrdy  
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Chestnut Ridge Christian Church  
Disciple Women  
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