



Black River  
**UNITED WAY**

**20  
24**

**IMPACT REPORT**



Black River  
**UNITED WAY**

**UNITED WAY MOBILIZES  
COMMUNITIES TO ACTION  
SO ALL CAN THRIVE.**

## **MISSION & PURPOSE**

Black River United Way is leading Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties to sustainability by empowering the lives of its community members.

# VALUES

## COMMUNITY FOCUSED

We are committed to working with and for the citizens of Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties.

## COMMITMENT TO ACCESS

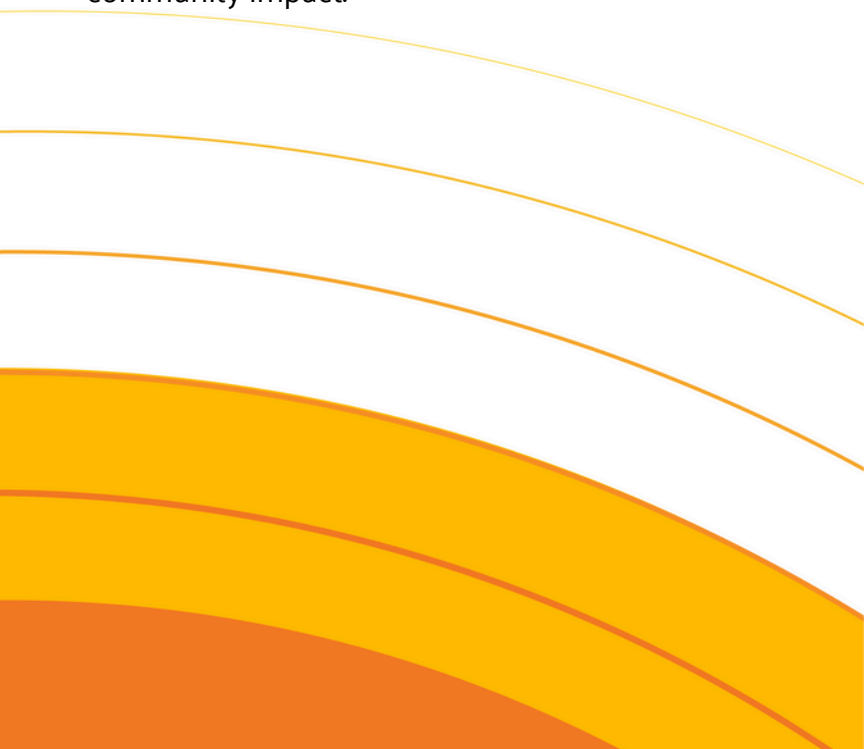
We will provide equitable access and awareness for our community to the programs that support BRUW's purpose by removing barriers and leveraging resources.

## COLLABORATIVE

We ensure that our work complements those organizations that support and share in BRUW's purpose in making our community stronger.

## CREDIBILITY

We will build and maintain trust by creating processes and procedures that ensure transparency, accountability, and integrity as we fulfill our goal of producing the greatest community impact.



# LETTER FROM THE 2024 BOARD CHAIR & CEO

Wow, what a year! 2024 has been a season of change at Black River United Way, filled with new programs, new partnerships, and as you can see, a new look!

We are thrilled to present this Impact Report, an account of the difference we've made together, thanks to your support. This report tells the story of our mission in 2023 - 2024; and progress towards our Bold Goals for Youth Opportunity and Community Resiliency in Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties. Those goals are:

1. Ensuring children enter kindergarten ready by age 5.
2. Ensuring that 90% of children are reading on or above grade level by the end of the third grade in 2031.
3. Ensuring our neighbors are prepared for and resilient through any kind of natural or man-made disaster.

As we present this report, I (Yolanda) would like to give a special thanks to our Board Chairwoman, Nicole Dingle. Thank you, Nicole, for your leadership of Black River United Way's Board of Directors in 2023-2025. This report, dedicated in your honor, is a testament to your service and contributions to help Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties thrive.

To all who partnered with us in 2024, helping advance our bold goals and drive sustainable, positive change in our community - Thank you! Together, United is the Way!



*Nicole Dingle*

**Board Chair**

*Yolanda McCray*

**President & CEO**





## MEET ROSS MARPLE, 2025-2027 BRUW BOARD CHAIR

Ross Marple grew up in Atlanta, Georgia and attended The Citadel in Charleston, SC. Ross and his wife Leigh Ann, and their three children reside in Murrells Inlet. When not volunteering with Black River United Way, Ross coaches youth baseball with the Waccamaw Baseball and Softball Association.

Ross is the President of BEC Construction and has served on the Black River United Way Board since 2022. In addition to serving as Chair Elect in 2023 - 2024, he is also the Board's Resource Development Chair, where his responsibilities have included identifying and connecting new donors to Black River United Way.

As Resource Development Chair, Ross was instrumental in the development of our newest fundraising event, Pickle For Progress, a Pickleball Tournament Fundraiser at East Bay Park on September 28, 2024 (See Page 20). We are thrilled to welcome him as our incoming Board Chair for 2025-2027, and look forward to seeing Black River United Way's continued growth and development under his leadership.

# YOU OPPOR

## WACCAMAW REGION FOR CHILDHOOD SUCCESS

The Waccamaw Region for Childhood Success is our tri-county response to early childhood needs in Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg Counties. This initiative focuses on kindergarten readiness and third grade reading success, and promotes working collaboratively between schools and communities that are committed to the success of every child.

Black River United Way focuses on Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties.

# JUST TUNNITY

## MISSION:READY KINDERGARTEN READINESS

Black River United Way's Mission: Ready initiative supports parents, caregivers, and communities to create early learning opportunities for young children, helping improve kindergarten readiness in Georgetown and Williamsburg counties.

## MISSION:READ THIRD GRADE READING SUCCESS

Black River United Way's Mission: Read initiative supports children in their development of essential literacy skills - setting them up for success in school, work, and life.

# YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

## BRU INTRODUCES THE BASICS TO GEORGETOWN AND WILLIAMSBURG COUNTIES

80% of brain growth happens in the first three years of life. Making the most of this critical time in a child's development is a top priority for parents, caregivers, educators, and health professionals alike. Yet, understanding exactly how to make the most of this time can be overwhelming.

To give every child a great start in life, we just need The Basics! The Basics are five fun, free, and simple principles that help children thrive:



By implementing The Basics Principles, parents, caregivers, and community members can promote the early learning and brain development of children ages 0-4, making the most of this critical time in a child's life.

Black River United Way, in partnership with United Way of Horry County, is a part of The Basics Movement, working through The Basics Waccamaw to improve the number of children in the tri-county area who are developmentally on track and entering kindergarten ready.

Our strategy is to bring a public health perspective to encourage enriched childhood brain development during the early stages of life. We focus on family and community— from parents and caregivers to community support systems outside of the home – while incorporating the latest research to identify disparities and implement innovative solutions.

In March 2024, we introduced The Basics to our community through launch events in Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties, featuring a screening and facilitated discussion of the film “No Small Matter”.



## 3RD ANNUAL KINDERWAVES MAKES A SPLASH IN SCHOOL READINESS

BRUW's 3rd Annual KinderWaves Kindergarten Transition Camp took place June 10th - 13th at 6 local elementary schools, with 42 pre-K children.

Through the theme of an oceanic safari, KinderWaves introduced local pre-K students to a love of reading, structured classroom

settings, science and mathematical thinking, hands-on learning activities, and relationship building. The camp ended with a family fun day at Beck Recreation Center featuring a stilt-walker and balloon artist, a hands-on tour of a fire truck from the Georgetown Fire Department, snow cones from the Georgetown County Sherriff's Department, free concessions, and a Triple P Parenting Workshop parenting class.



### MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO THE GENEROUS PARTNERSHIP OF



## PROMOTING POSITIVE PARENTING THROUGH TRIPLE P

Triple P (the Positive Parenting Program) is one of the most trusted parenting programs across the globe, utilized in over 30 countries. This evidence based program is a parenting and family support system designed to prevent and treat behavioral and emotional problems in children up to the age of 12.

Black River United Way has been able to offer this program to our community since 2019, thanks to the partnership of the Children's Trust of South Carolina.



**In 2023-2024, BRUW provided Triple P parenting classes to 115 caregivers!**

# YOUTH OPPORTUNITY



**AmeriCorps**  
South Carolina

## BRUW AMERICORPS PROGRAM CONCLUDES AFTER NINE SUCCESSFUL YEARS OF IMPACT

Since 2015, Black River United Way has been the recipient of an AmeriCorps South Carolina grant, providing an opportunity for AmeriCorps Members to serve Georgetown and Williamsburg counties. After nine successful years of impact, in July BRUW's AmeriCorps program focused on early literacy reached its conclusion. Through AmeriCorps SC, Black River United Way leveraged:

- \$969,248 in matching funds to generate \$2.68 MM in program support
- 204 AmeriCorps Members to serve at 12 elementary schools, 2 child development centers, and 5 after school programs
- 76,140.75 hours of volunteer time to tutor 1,479 students, improving 576 to reading on or above grade level and supporting 541 students' academic improvement in reading

We are so grateful for our incredible partnership with the AmeriCorps South Carolina Program and the South Carolina Service Commission. Though these funding partnerships have ended, their impact lives on through each child supported to third grade reading success.

## INTRODUCING HEROES FOR LITERACY

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY



**International  
Paper**



In September, we launched Heroes For Literacy, a program that continues our efforts to provide support to struggling readers in K-3rd grades. Heroes For Literacy (H4L) is an initiative where community members dedicate 1.5 hours each week for nine weeks to tutor children in reading. 19 Heroes were recruited, and trained to volunteer in 6 local elementary schools across Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties during Fall 2024. Thank you to the first of many Heroes For Literacy serving our community.



## STOPPING THE "SUMMER SLIDE" - SUMMER LEARNING LOSS PREVENTED THROUGH SUMMER SAIL PROGRAM

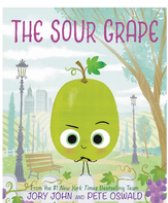
Black River United Way hosted its annual summer enrichment program, Summer SAIL, in partnership with Tidelands Health and Brown's Ferry Outreach from June 4 to June 26, 2024. Through the Summer SAIL (Science And Inquiry Learning) Program, community volunteers and local elementary schools work with students to maintain their skills and competencies in reading and math over the summer, eliminating summer learning loss. 32 students in Kindergarten through 5th grade were assisted through the four week program. Students were assessed at the beginning and the end of the program in math and reading. Student assessments showed a 1.5% improvement on average over the summer, demonstrating the effectiveness of Summer SAIL in stopping the "summer slide".

### SUMMER SAIL 2024 IMPACT



- 32 STUDENTS IN K- 3RD GRADES ATTENDED
- 1.5% AVERAGE STUDENT IMPROVEMENT IN READING & MATH

### UNITED TO READ



**United to Read** is an annual reading event where volunteers read to elementary school children. In 2024, 92 volunteers read to over 3,000 children in pre-K, 1st, 2nd, and Special Education classes across Georgetown and Williamsburg County School Districts.

## OLIVIA'S STORY\*

Imagine the despair of a child who believes that he or she cannot read. For too many young students, this untrue belief is their reality.

Dorothy Thornal, an AmeriCorps member working in Black River United Way's literacy tutoring program, is very familiar with children that lack confidence in their reading ability. Children, like Olivia.

"Olivia came to me this year with no self confidence. Every time we read, looked at sight words or learned something new, she would say she couldn't do that. She thought all the other students knew more than she did. She would put her head on the table and cry".

Many students like Olivia require extra support in reading. Through Black River United Way's Mission: Read initiative, children like Olivia are able to receive that extra support from trained volunteer literacy specialists like Miss Dorothy. In partnership with our local schools, Black River United Way empowers volunteers to help students improve literacy skills such as fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Beyond helping children overcome early grade reading struggles, this support can increase a child's confidence in literacy, helping them challenge untrue beliefs about their own reading ability.

For Olivia, Miss Dorothy had a big role in helping her challenge the belief that she couldn't read.

“

**“[Olivia] is doing a great job sounding out words and her reading skills have greatly improved.... But most importantly, she was proud of her work.”**

“We all encouraged her. She began to focus on what she could do and not what she couldn't do.” Since Miss Dorothy began working with Olivia, not only have her skills improved, but most of all her confidence has increased. “She is doing a great job sounding out words and her reading skills have greatly improved. She is enjoying her time with me. She wrote me a nice letter to Santa and she illustrated it very well. But, most importantly, she was proud of her work.”

With the skills, support, and confidence she needs, 1st grader Olivia is well on her way to becoming a thriving reader. Stories like Olivia's illustrate the importance of our bold goal for early childhood success - that by 2031, 90% of students in Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties are reading on or above grade level by the end of the third grade.

With your support, Black River United Way is moving our community towards this goal one child, and one story at a time. Through your partnership, BRUW is leading the charge to meet early childhood needs - with strategies to close the reading gap, increase family engagement, eliminate summer learning loss, and improve kindergarten readiness.

\*Name changed for confidentiality



# MISSION: READ

## YOUTH OPPORTUNITY AT A GLANCE: 2023-2024 MISSION: READ IMPACT



Black River  
**UNITED WAY**

**MISSION: READ**

### IN PARTNERSHIP WITH...



### WORKED COLLABORATELY THROUGH...



**AmeriCorps**  
South Carolina

**11 AmeriCorps**  
Members



**1 Reading**  
Buddy



**7 REAL**  
Mentors



**5 Elementary**  
Schools

### SERVING...

**220 Students** Through  
Literacy Tutoring



**144 Students** Through  
REAL Mentors



### PROVIDING...



**2,614.45 Hours** of  
Tutoring



**576 Books**

### RESULTING IN A COLLECTIVE IMPACT OF



**99.95% of Students** Tutored  
(199 Students) Showing  
Improved Academic  
Performance in Literacy



**40% of Students** Tutored  
(80 Students) Improved to  
Reading On or Above Grade  
Level

# COMMUNITY RESILIENT

Every community deserves the opportunity to prosper. At Black River United Way we work with our neighbors to build resilient communities that are ready for any challenge. Through disaster preparedness and recovery and health and human services, we are strengthening the foundations of communities for a more sustainable and secure future.

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS & RECOVERY

### BE READY!

Through Be Ready! Black River United Way empowers our community members with the knowledge and resources they need to prepare for, recover from, and respond to disaster. Our proactive approach ensures that all our residents are resilient and ready for any kind of natural or man-made disaster.

# COMMUNITY EFFICIENCY

## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

211

United Way is there when our communities need us. One way that happens – in 99% of the U.S. and across Canada – is through 211. This confidential 24/7 call center connects people with locally available help.

## EMERGENCY FOOD & SHELTER PROGRAM

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program supplements and expands ongoing work of local social service organizations to provide shelter, food and supportive services to individuals and families who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, hunger and/or homelessness.

# COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

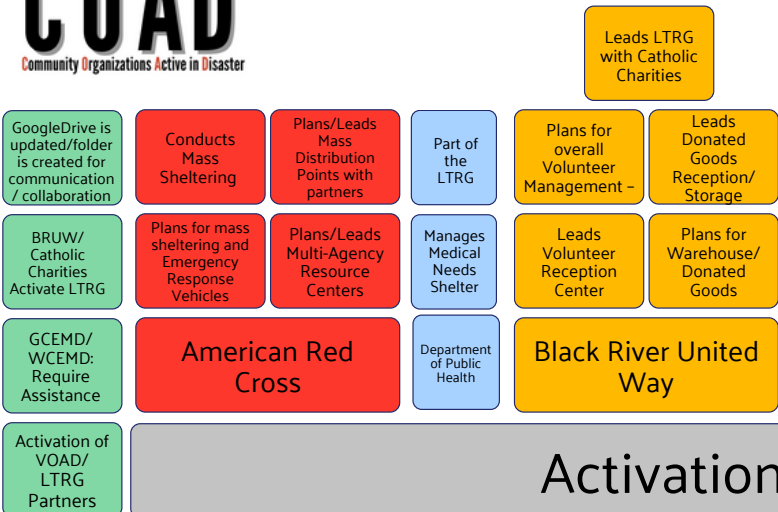
## HELPING GEORGETOWN & WILLIAMSBURG COUNTIES “BE READY!” FOR DISASTER

Black River United Way is the lead agency of the Winyah Bay COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) / Long-Term Recovery Group, spearheading the effort to help our community “Be Ready” for disaster and activating at the speed of need when our residents are impacted.

Through our leadership of the COAD, we leverage our community networks to facilitate compassionate, comprehensive aid, ensuring all human needs are met. See below activation chart to understand how we partner during disaster.

### 2023-2024 BE READY! IMPACT

- **Equipped 824 students to “Be Ready!” for disaster through training and disaster starter kits through partnership with DSM-Firmenich and Georgetown County EMD.**
- **Collaborated with the Georgetown County EMD to conduct the WB COAD’s first Hurricane Table Top Exercise to prepare for disaster.**
- **Utilized the COAD’s training and collaboration to save a home from mold damage during a severe weather event.**



# BE READY!



## FEMA

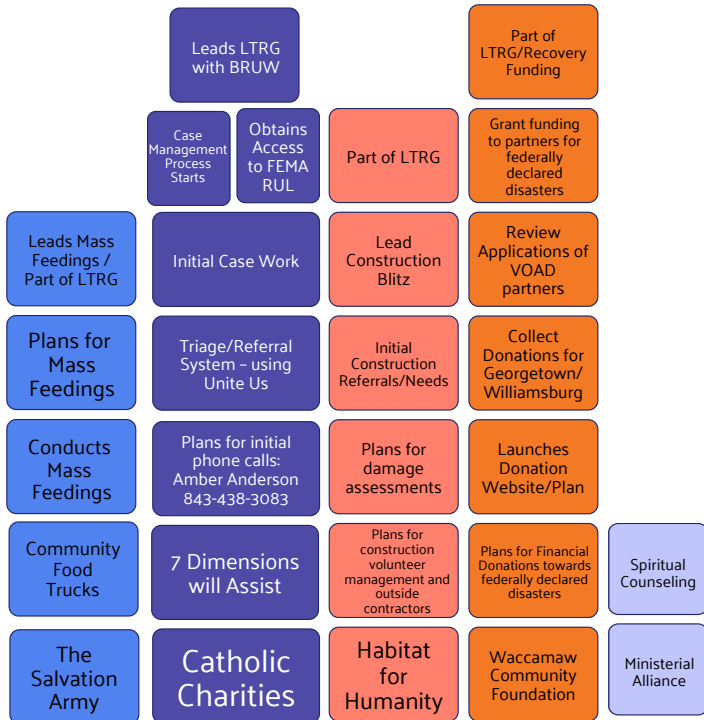
EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER PROGRAM

\$76,324 DISTRIBUTED TO 4 AGENCIES TO SUPPORT EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER NEEDS.



211 IN GEORGETOWN AND WILLIAMSBURG COUNTIES  
JAN - OCT 2024

- 1,018 CALLS RECEIVED
- 3,116 SERVICE REFERRALS



of Agencies

# COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

## MEET “ALICE”

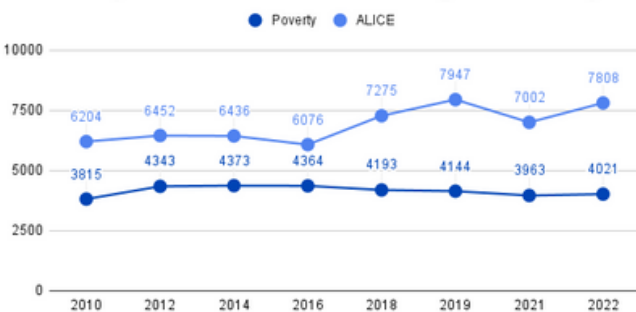
For a growing number of U.S. households, financial stability is out of reach, no matter how hard their members work. These households are **ALICE – Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed** – earning above the Federal Poverty Level yet struggling to afford basic expenses.

Black River United Way is advancing work with these households by funding our community’s access to data on ALICE in Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties. Additionally, BRUW’s 211 and Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) support ALICE households by connecting families with resources and funding local agencies providing basic needs.

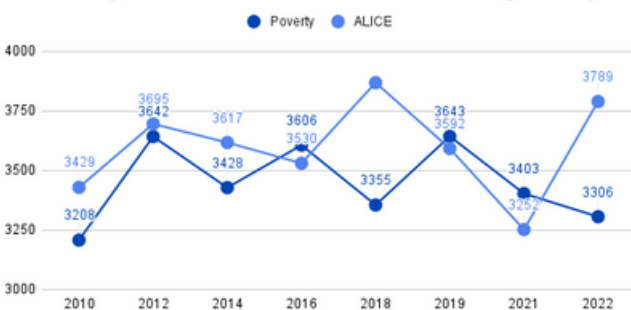
Many of our neighbors are ALICE, with 30% of households in Georgetown County, and 32% of households in Williamsburg County meeting the definition of ALICE. Below is a snapshot of Poverty and ALICE. Household totals in Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties. Since 2010, the number of ALICE households as a percentage of total households remains unchanged, yet the total number of ALICE households increased.

### Key Finding #1: Financial Hardship Has Changed Over Time

Poverty & ALICE Households in Georgetown County



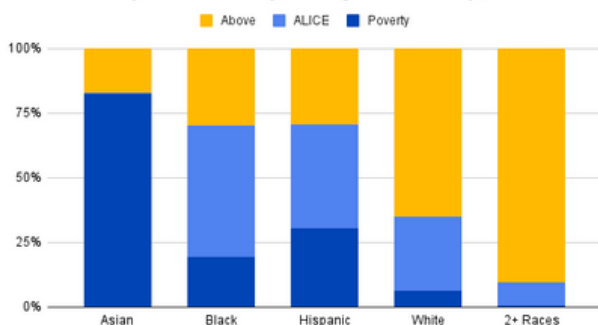
Poverty & ALICE Households in Williamsburg County



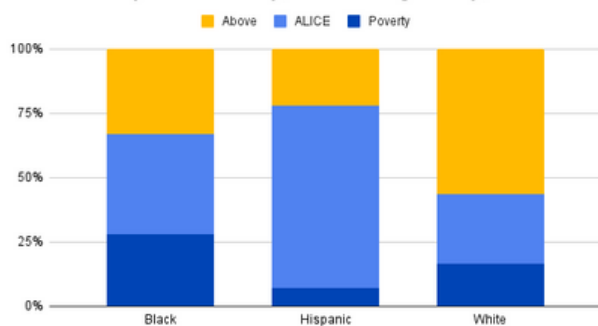
By total number, groups with the largest population of households below the ALICE Threshold tend to also be in the largest demographic groups. However, when looking at the proportion of each group that is below the ALICE Threshold, it is clear that some groups are more likely to be ALICE than others.

## Key Finding #2: Financial Hardship is Not Equally Distributed

Households by Race/Ethnicity, Georgetown County, SC 2022



Households by Race/Ethnicity, Williamsburg County, SC 2022



## Key Finding #3: There are differences in financial hardship by household type and age of householder.

Group Type	GC % Below	WC % Below
Single or Cohabiting (no children)	48	60
Married (with children)	24	30
Single-Female-Headed (with children)	94	87
Single-Male-Headed (with children)	85	87
Under 25	69	67
25 to 44 Years	51	58
45 to 64 Years	49	55
65 Years and Over	40	64

For more county-level findings and complete reports on ALICE in SC, scan the QR code below:



[www.unitedforalice.org/state-overview/south-carolina](http://www.unitedforalice.org/state-overview/south-carolina)

# POWER OF THE *Purse*

2025 Tickets &  
Sponsorship Info



On March 21, 2024, Black River United Way hosted its 2nd Annual **Power of the Purse** luncheon at The Manor House at Wedgefield Plantation. Power of the Purse (POP) is our signature women's fundraiser supporting Youth Opportunity in Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties. Featuring keynote speaker Dr. Katrina Hutchins (affectionately known as "Dr. K") and a silent purse auction, POP was a day for women changemakers to unite and show what can be accomplished when we work together, raising \$7,410 for our mission. Special thanks to our Satchel Sponsors - Capalbo Designs & Remodeling, International Paper Georgetown Mill's Women in IP Employee Networking Circle, and Santee Cooper; Floral Sponsor - Carolina Charm Florist; and Purse Sponsors - Alter Ego, Barefoot General Store, Island Specialties, Limeable, Mimi Seabrook, Retail Therapy, and A Special Private Donor.



# 2024





# PICKLE FOR PROGRESS

On September 28, 2024, Black River United Way hosted its inaugural Pickle For Progress Pickleball Tournament. Featuring 113 players in 11 divisions, it was an incredible event, raising \$17,350 towards our mission. Special thanks to our sponsors for their support of our first Pickle For Progress: Beverly Homes (Presenting Sponsor); Elvis Services, Gateway Mortgage - The Parker Group, and Elliott Phelan Law (Court Sponsors); Capalbo Remodeling & Construction (Ball Sponsor); Ortho SC, BEC Construction, Coastal Key Group Realty, and East Coast Cars (Pickle Sponsors); The Litchfield Company, Tailwalker Marine, Jacqueline N. Clancy Legal Nurse Consultant, Winslow Law Firm, G3, and Harmon & Felts (Sideline Sponsors).

Save the Date  
for BRUW's 2nd  
Annual Pickle  
For Progress  
Tournament on  
September 27,  
2025!



# PARTNERSHIPS

## GRANT PARTNERSHIPS



United Way Association of South Carolina



Waccamaw Community Foundation



GEORGETOWN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Children's Trust OF SOUTH CAROLINA



PRINCE GEORGE WINYAH ANGLICAN CHURCH WOMEN



TIDELANDS HEALTH with MUSC Health



International Paper

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## IMPACT CAMPAIGNS



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GET INVOLVED



GIVE BACK



TAKE ACTION

