



# GREATER VALDOSTA YEAR 2 ANNUAL REPORT

March 2023

## GREATER VALDOSTA UNITED WAY

Serving Atkinson, Berrien,  
Brooks, Clinch, Cook, Echols,  
Lanier, and Lowndes Counties

1609 N. Patterson Str  
Valdosta, GA 31602  
229-242-2208



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## About the Resilient Georgia Regional Grants

[Resilient Georgia](#) has been working with 16 regions across Georgia to provide an emphasis on trauma-informed awareness and care, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and child sexual abuse prevention training as a basis to transform systems and procedures crossing both public and private sectors.

- Resilient Georgia serves as a supportive and guiding resource during each region's planning and implementation process.
- These regional action plans each address the behavioral health needs of individuals birth through 26 years old and families in the community and surrounding counties using the Collective Impact framework (a diverse, robust and well-planned public-private partnership).
- Trauma-Informed Care, ACEs and child sexual abuse prevention can be the basis for systemic changes in a community. Each region has identified how one or more of these content areas are delivered to diverse community members through formal training, education, marketing and communications.
- Round 1 grants were awarded in November 2019 to regional coalitions based out of Athens, Augusta, Macon, Savannah and surrounding areas. Round 2 grants were awarded in July 2020 to regional coalitions based out of Albany, Columbus, Rome, Thomasville and surrounding areas. Round 3 grants were awarded in March 2021 to regional coalitions based out of Clayton, Cobb, Gwinnett, Valdosta and surrounding areas. Round 4 funding was awarded in December 2021 to regional coalitions based out of Atlanta, Brunswick, Gainesville, and Waycross and the surrounding areas.



## Coalition Mission:

To lead a community wide coalition to increase awareness and access to mental health resources in Atkinson, Berrien, Brooks, Clinch, Cook, Echols, Lanier, and Lowndes Counties to improve people’s health mentally and physically; to create positive change by bringing resources together to improve people’s lives in local communities through:

- Continuing to develop mental health awareness through training and education;
- Focusing on suicide prevention in youth up to age 26;
- Evaluating training outcomes to assess the impact on trauma-informed awareness and education;
- Promoting resiliency in South Georgia through a unified trauma-informed response.

Visit our link on the Resilient Georgia website to learn more at <https://www.resilientga.org/greatervaldostaunitedway>.

## Summary

The Greater Valdosta United Way Coalition (GVUW Coalition) focuses its evidence-based coalition efforts on rural, urban and suburban areas in the region, with targeted populations including:

- Middle-school and high-school aged kids (11-16 years old)
- School counselors and coaches
- Afterschool programs
- Non-profit employees serving the homeless, victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Marketing awareness across a 50-mile radius from Valdosta.

In partnership with retired professional athletes, the coalition raises awareness about mental health in the region, engaging children, school counselors, social workers, coaches, and mental health professionals. The coalition, among several other efforts, holds trainings to support community resilience and prevent suicide.



**3 Realms of ACEs**

Greater Valdosta United Way presents:  
**The Community Resiliency Model® Introduction**  
For Early Care and Learning Professionals

**THE RESILIENT ZONE™ "OK" ZONE**

**ONE 90 MINUTE EVIDENCE-BASED TRAINING**

- Earns 1 DECAI approved training hour.

**Date:** September 13, 2022 11:00 am - 12:30 pm  
**Location:** Virtual  
**To register:** Scan the QR code or use the link below  
<https://www.gvuw.org/2022/09/13/091322-resiliency-model-introduction/>

Center for International Service and Pedagogy | Resilient GEORGIA | Greater Valdosta United Way | United Way



## Leadership Team and Contributors

**Michael Smith - Chair**

President/CEO, Greater Valdosta United Way

**Michelle Girtman – Co-Chair**

Executive Director, The Haven

**Mary Crawford – Co-Chair**

Executive Director, Girls on the Run South Ga Chapter

**Susan Nebel – Secretary**

Community Impact Director, Greater Valdosta United Way

**April Thompson**

Coordinator, Coffee County Family Connection/Know Your Worth

**Ryan Tuten**

Director, Youth Impact Center (Lanier County)

**Jay Watkins**

Pastoral Advisor, Camp Rock of Georgia

Coalition Partners

**Greater Valdosta United Way  
Coalition Partners**



Greater Valdosta United Way  
Serving South Georgia



Key Impacts/Accomplishments





## TIC/ACES Services

GVUW serves as an umbrella organization, partnering with 22 local non-profits. We provide our partners with funding for the programs and services they provide in our community that align with our focus areas. GVUW four focus areas are aimed at preventing ACES. All of our 22 partner agencies provide services that are geared towards preventing ACES. Our 4 core focus areas are essential to avoid unhealthy levels of stress that are caused by ACE's.

Additionally, we have several microgrants that allow us to provide funding to non-partner agencies.

- **United2Prevent** hosted a 5k called "Run to Prevent" in an effort to raise awareness of the suicide epidemic in our community during National Suicide Prevention Month.
- **NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness**, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. Our coalition provided \$1,000 to help fund the start of a NAMI chapter in Valdosta.
- **Jesus and Jam**, a non-profit in Clinch County is offering Community Counseling Day. Our coalition provided \$2,000 for community therapy sessions and starting parenting classes.

## Prevention/Intervention

### Tackling Mental Health with Adrian Peterson

Adrian came and spoke on 3 occasions within our 2<sup>nd</sup> year grant period. He Toured and spoke to kids at Ware County, Coffee County, and Valdosta City Schools. He also met and spoke with coaches and school counselors during lunch.

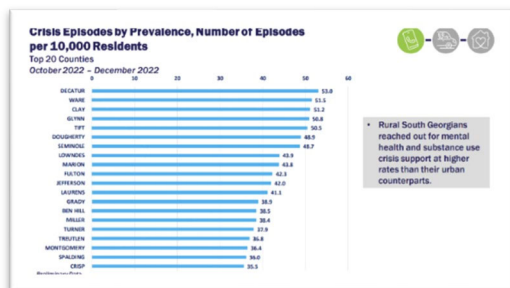
Overall, he spoke to almost 5,000 students and a least 100 teachers, coaches, and school counselors. He signed books, hats and footballs. He spoke to grades 4th through 12th in lunchrooms and gymnasiums. Adrian spoke about bullying, social media stressors, anxiety, dealing with failure, and more. He also encouraged students to find people they can trust and look to when having difficult feelings.

### NAMI

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness: GVUW provided NAMI: Valdosta Chapter with \$1000 seed money to help organization build a framework. The Valdosta Chapter is currently under the guidance of the NAMI, Moultrie Chapter. They have already met three times this year to discuss the goals of chapter. We are hopeful that the Valdosta chapter will be stand-alone by end of 2023.

### 9-8-8

Since its inception we have consistently tried to spread awareness of newly implemented 9-8-8 crisis number through direct marketing; the increased call volume for our service area is supported by data.





**988 SUICIDE & CRISIS  
LIFELINE**

KNOW.  
YOUR.  
WORTH.

Greater Valdosta United Way  
Serving South Georgia

United Way

Resilient  
GEORGIA

*Tomorrow*  
**NEEDS YOU**



Magnolia  
Houses

Greater Valdosta United Way  
Serving South Georgia

United Way

Resilient  
GEORGIA

**EVERY THOUGHT COUNTS!**  
TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



Resilient  
GEORGIA

United Way  
GREATER VALDOSTA



**Talk About Mental Health,  
Because You're NOT ALONE!**

Resilient  
GEORGIA

**1-800-715-4225**  
(Georgia Crisis and Access Line)

United Way  
GREATER VALDOSTA



## Advocacy and Policy

### 2-1-1

Our President/CEO has spent countless hours trying to bring 2-1-1 back to our area. There are only 3 states that do not have state-wide 2-1-1 coverage and Georgia is one of them.

211 is the most comprehensive source of information about local resources and services in the country. It is powered by people: thousands of caring, local experts are available to help, 24/7. Calls to 211 are confidential and can be anonymous.

The 211 networks in the United States respond to more than **20 million requests** for help every year. Most calls, web chats, and text messages are from people looking for help meeting basic needs like housing, food, transportation, and health care. 211 can be accessed by phone or computer, at [211.org](http://211.org). A toll-free call to 211 connects you to a community resource specialist in your area who can put you in touch with local organizations that provide critical services. You'll find information about:

- supplemental food and nutrition programs
- shelter and housing options and utilities assistance
- pandemic information
- emergency information and disaster relief
- employment and education opportunities
- services for veterans
- health care, vaccination and health epidemic information
- addiction prevention and rehabilitation programs
- reentry help for ex-offenders
- support groups for individuals with mental illnesses or special needs
- a safe, confidential path out of physical and/or emotional domestic abuse

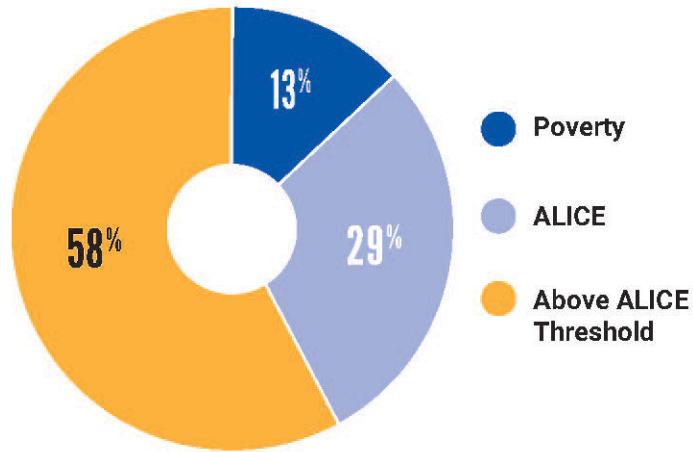
### A.L.I.C.E

Day after day, our essential workers serve our meals, check out our groceries, and care for our children and our elderly. They are the engine that keeps our economy running. Yet no matter how hard they work, they still cannot afford household basics. Hidden in plain sight, nearly one-third of U.S. households are mired in this constant struggle. Known as ALICE® (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), these households earn income above the Federal Poverty Level – disqualifying them from most types of government assistance – but less than what it costs to make ends meet. While such hardship is pervasive, households of color are disproportionately ALICE.

“ALICE also represents the data reshaping the dialogue on financial hardship, and a grassroots movement that is spreading across the United States.” ([www.unitedforalice.org](http://www.unitedforalice.org))

ALICE is already in 25 other states and growing; Georgia will be the 26<sup>th</sup> state. It provides data on key indicators and demographics (race, gender, age, geography, etc.). It can be compared across states, statewide, and down individual counties, zip codes, and census tracts. We can test how interventions and investments in infrastructure are working or not working overtime. All the ALICE materials are turnkey. It humanizes economic data and includes a focus on building intergenerational wealth and well-being – not short-term only income and stopgaps basic needs. Ultimately it can help ensure communities are thriving and nonprofits/businesses/government/foundations are better informed.

### Total U.S. Households in 2018: 121 Million



Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2018; American Community Survey, 2018

#### Other Advocacy and Policy Efforts

GVUW is actively engaged with multiple organizations within Lowndes County including the Valdosta Civic Roundtable (human service providers), and the South-Central Georgia Homeless Task Force. Our Community Impact Director, Susan Nebel, serves as Vice Chair of the Valdosta Civic Roundtable and Secretary for the Homeless Task Force.



## Research

### Needs Assessment

Through the efforts of Resilient Georgia, Valdosta State University's Center for South Georgia Regional Impact, and the Greater Valdosta United Way (GVUW), the survey research project **"GVUW Needs Assessment"** has been created.

This is a voluntary, anonymous 30-question community needs assessment to collect data in our **11-county service area: Atkinson, Bacon, Berrien, Brooks, Clinch, Coffee, Echols, Jeff Davis, Lanier, Lowndes, and Ware Counties.**

Our mission at the GVUW is to create positive change by bringing resources together to improve people's lives in our communities. The survey will help us gather data on the needs of our community members over the last two years, learn where resources are lacking, and get a feel for the mental health of those we serve. The goal is to align our funding to match the needs of our region with a focus on Basic Needs, Housing and Sheltering, Youth Afterschool Programs, and Mental Health Training and Awareness.

Once the survey is submitted, there are links provided to educate people on the community resources available to them, locally and statewide. We expect to have results from the survey in early summer. We will use this data to assess the most pressing needs in our community and the lack of resources available to meet these needs.

The poster features the logos for Greater Valdosta United Way (Serving South Georgia) and United Way at the top. The main title is "Community Needs Assessment" with a subtext: "Participants who complete this anonymous 30 question survey have the opportunity to enter in a raffle for a chance to win a prize!". A prominent orange button with a hand cursor icon says "TAKE SURVEY", and a QR code is positioned to its right. Below this is a map of the 11-county service area, with counties labeled: Jeff Davis, Coffee, Bacon, Berrien, Atkinson, Ware, Lanier, Clinch, Brooks, Lowndes, and Echols. At the bottom, logos for United Way, Resilient GEORGIA, and the Center for South Georgia Regional Impact (Valdosta State University) are displayed. A small block of text at the very bottom provides the purpose of the survey and contact information for the IRB Administrator.

Training	Logo	Date	# of Participants	Counties Covered
Mental Health & Stress; Coloring/Destressing		7/25/2022	9	Lowndes
Darkness to Light		8/9/2022	3	Lowndes & Ware
Social Media and the Link to Trafficking		8/31/2022	29	Southern Judicial Circuit
Community Resiliency Model		9/13/2022	10	Lowndes
Community Resources: Finding Help for Homelessness		9/14/2022	3	Lowndes
Community Resiliency Model		10/12/2022	20	Lowndes
Darkness to Light		10/13/2022	12	Lanier
Mental Health Mat ers		10/28/2022	70	Lowndes
Chalk About Mental Health		10/28/2022	460	Coffee
SuicideTalk		1/4/2023	26	Lowndes, Coffee
Resilience Enhancement & Learning Model		2/22/2023	30	Lowndes
Bridges to Therapy		3/26/2023	10	Lowndes
Community Resiliency Model		3/27/2023	13	Lowndes
Community Resiliency Model		3/27/2023	5	Lanier
Community Resiliency Model		3/27/2023	20	Berrien
	<b>Total Trained</b>		<b>710</b>	



## Innovative Partnerships

### Southside Recreation Center

After school care is a huge component of preventing ACEs. Research shows that having Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), causes unhealthy levels of stress. These high levels of stress, which are frequent and prolonged, can dramatically impact how the brain develops and increase the risk of health and social problems throughout a lifetime. Research also shows that afterschool and summer learning programs provide students with the additional supports they need to help prevent ACEs. (from [www.ConnectionsMatter.org](http://www.ConnectionsMatter.org) & [www.afterschool.org](http://www.afterschool.org)). That's why the GVUW coalition has made it a priority to help SSRC as much as possible. As this partnership continues to grow, we hope to be able to make a greater impact on the southside community.

Southside Recreation Center, Inc. is a non-profit organization, incorporated in 1964. The mission of SSRC is providing behavioral guidance, and promoting healthy, social, educational, vocational, recreational, and character development to youth and other members of the community. This facility is located on the south side of Lowndes County in a predominately African American and underserved community.

In the beginning, Southside Recreation Center gave African-American youth, a supervised place to play and have fun in an era when other recreational facilities were off limits to non-whites. Today, southside recreation center serves over 500 youth each year of all ethnicity with prevention/intervention programming that positively affects change for children and families and encourages wholesome and healthy lifestyles. This service is provided through the after school & summer programs, and other annual family-oriented events.

For 57 years, Southside has continued to be a catalyst in the community and has evolved to meet the most urgent demands of high-risk, low-income youth and their families.

Our coalition leader, Michael Smith, has worked tirelessly for over a year trying to help SSRC gain funding to make the facility fully operational. In May of 2022, we were able to obtain funding through the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget of \$33,480 for new flooring throughout the facility, a new heating and air conditioning unit, and painting of the building. These improvements are taking place now with hopes that by summer 2023 the facility will be able to offer more services to more deserving youth. We also, throughout the year, have donated countless supplies to the organization, including coloring books and crayons, book bags, toys, and of course ice cream.





### Beautiful Creations by Chanel, Inc.

Beautiful Creations by Chanel, Incorporated was developed while Chanel was working as a customer service manager at Walmart when she was touched by the story of a mother not being able to purchase paper for her daughter in 2008.

Their 501(c)(3) nonprofit status was granted in February 2012 to expand the Tools for School initiative providing over 500 bookbags with school supplies to children in Valdosta (Orla West, Hudson Dockett, Park Chase, Brittany Woods, and Azalea Wood), Quitman, Adel, Lakeland, and her hometown of Orlando, Florida (Tools for School: Teacher Edition).

The vision for Beautiful Creations by Chanel has expanded by implementing community initiatives such as Change for Prosperity Mentoring Program, C.O.A.T.S (Covering Others Always Through Service) Drive, Rags to Riches sending seniors to prom all expenses paid for, A Beautiful Christmas to allow kids to experience holiday cheer with gifts, music, and laughter, and the Beautiful Creations by Chanel Scholarship for graduating seniors.

Beautiful Creations is a new partner agency for the GVUW. We are beyond thrilled to have established a partnership with this amazing organization. Chanel's staff and board are entirely made up of people of color and they are working to bring diversity and change to this area.



## Spotlight

“Me overcoming my mental health challenges can be summed up in one word, and its community.” -

Tra Battle

Tra Battle played for the San Diego Chargers and Dallas Cowboys and was also a University of Georgia football player. Battle struggled to figure out who he was after his football playing days concluded. As Tra contemplated suicide, he picked up the phone and called his former coach Mark Richt for help. For Battle, his community helped him move through challenging times and he is sharing this message with South Georgia.

Tra Battle visited Valdosta in August 2022 to help raise awareness of mental health issues. Greater Valdosta United Way and The Haven sponsored their 2nd annual “Unite” dinner to spotlight these issues and fundraise for special programs. Tra spoke to over 300 community leaders at the event, sharing that there is no discrimination when it comes to mental illness. People from all backgrounds can struggle with mental health issues.

Tra returned to Valdosta in March 2023 to continue spreading awareness for mental health. Tra visited Coffee County High School and Freshmen Academy prior to his “We All Face Battles” presentation with coalition partner, United2Prevent; an organization whose mission is aimed at preventing suicide. During his visit to Douglas, GA, Tra spoke to over 500 high school students; approximately 500 freshmen academy students, and 35 local counselors, social workers, administration, and Know Your Worth Board members.







## Greater Valdosta United Way, Mental Health Symposium

In June 2022, Greater Valdosta United Way hosted a Sports & Mental Health Takeover that featured sports celebrities Jumaine Jones, Lamar Odom, Joe Smith, Anthony Smith, Otis Nixon, and Quincy Carter. The celebrities spoke to students about childhood experiences that led to depression and alcohol use to raise awareness and destigmatize talking about mental health. The Takeover also included a mental health panel discussion, a youth sports camp, and a celebrity basketball game.

### Celebrities:

- Jumaine Jones: NBA Hall of Fame Alumni and former Philadelphia 76er
- Lamar Odom: former NBA champion, LA Lakers
- Joe Smith: 1<sup>st</sup> overall NBA draft pick in 95'
- Anthony Smith: 2x NFL Super bowl Champion
- Otis Nixon: former MLB Atlanta Braves
- Quincy Carter: UGA quarterback; NFL Dallas Cowboys

### Mental Health Panel:

- Coach Tremaine Jackson, VSU Blazers Football
- Coach Shelton Felton, Valdosta High School Football
- Coach James Lee, Valdosta High School Men's Basketball
- Dr. Demetria Cannady, Work in Progress, LLC
- Michelle Girtman, Director of The Haven
- JaTaryia Thomas, Moderator

We had 75 people attend the Mental Health Symposium; over 60 youth participated in the youth basketball and football camps; and over 300 people attended the Celebrity Basketball Game.

### Media Coverage

- [Mental Health Takeover: Former Pros Join Coaches To Discuss Mental Health](#)
- [Former NBA Player Jumaine Jones Hosted His Basketball Camp](#)
- [Former NBA Player Spreads Love To Azalea City](#)
- [Valdosta Holds Off Winnersville In Celebrity Game](#)
- [Azalea City To Host Celebrity Basketball Game For Mental Health](#)





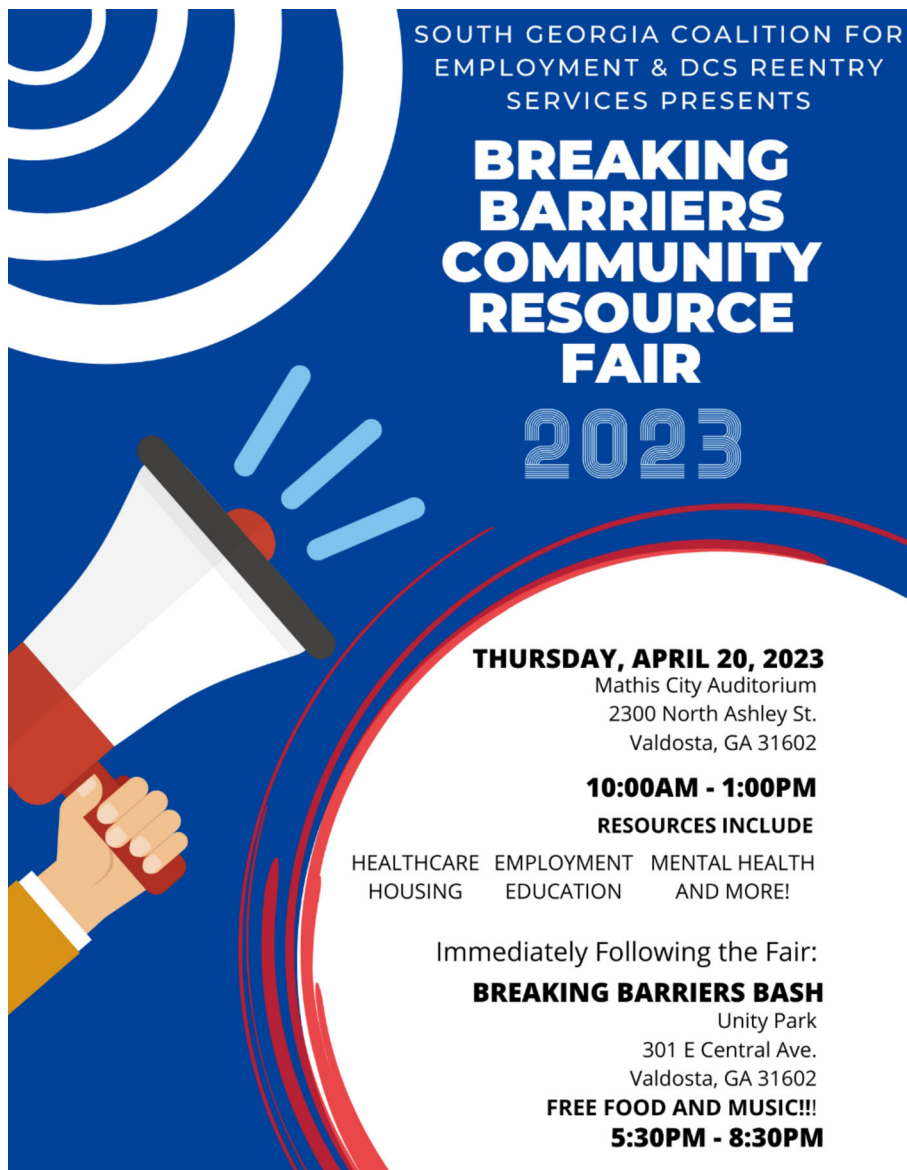
## Inspired Action

Learn more about Greater Valdosta United Way:

Visit our Resilient Georgia [coalition webpage](#) and the [Greater Valdosta United Way website](#). Follow them on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) @greatervaldostaunitedway.

Sign up for our newsletter here: [GVUW Newsletter](#)

## Upcoming Community Events:

The poster is primarily blue with white and red accents. On the left, there is a graphic of a hand holding a megaphone, with sound waves emanating from it. The top left corner features a white and blue circular pattern. The text is arranged in a clear, hierarchical layout, starting with the organizing coalition, followed by the event title and year, then the date, location, and time. A list of resources is provided, and the poster concludes with information about a follow-up event, including its name, location, and time.

SOUTH GEORGIA COALITION FOR  
EMPLOYMENT & DCS REENTRY  
SERVICES PRESENTS

**BREAKING  
BARRIERS  
COMMUNITY  
RESOURCE  
FAIR**

**2023**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023**  
Mathis City Auditorium  
2300 North Ashley St.  
Valdosta, GA 31602

**10:00AM - 1:00PM**

**RESOURCES INCLUDE**  
HEALTHCARE EMPLOYMENT MENTAL HEALTH  
HOUSING EDUCATION AND MORE!

Immediately Following the Fair:

**BREAKING BARRIERS BASH**  
Unity Park  
301 E Central Ave.  
Valdosta, GA 31602

**FREE FOOD AND MUSIC!!!**  
**5:30PM - 8:30PM**

FREE TO THE COMMUNITY

JESUS AND JAM  
75 HAMPTON STREET HOMERVILLE, GA

# COMMUNITY COUNSELING DAY

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26TH

- \* INDIVIDUALIZED COUNSELING SESSIONS
- \* MOVING TOWARD PERSONAL WHOLENESS
- \* COMPREHENSIVE COUNSELING WITH A BIBLICAL BASE

TO SCHEDULE A SESSION  
CALL: 229-630-5413  
EMAIL:  
SOULCAREOFSOUTHGA@GMAIL.COM

OFFERED BY CASEY HORNE, LCPC: CASEY IS A LICENSED CLINICAL PASTORAL COUNSELOR WHO HAS A PASSION FOR OUR COMMUNITY. SHE HAS A HEART FOR HELPING OTHERS NAVIGATE LIFE'S TRIALS WITH THE GRACE OF GOD.