



**Waycross Area Resilient
Georgia Partnership
Annual Report 2022**



Table of Contents

<i>About the Resilient Georgia Regional Grants</i>	3
<i>Coalition Mission</i>	3
<i>Summary</i>	4
<i>Leadership Team and Contributors</i>	4
<i>Coalition Partners</i>	5
<i>Messages from Leadership and/or Partners with the Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership</i>	6
<i>Key Impacts/Accomplishments</i>	8
<i>Description of Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)-Related Efforts</i>	10
Prevention/Intervention	10
Advocacy and Policy.....	12
Personal Commitments made by our partners:	13
Research.....	13
Training	14
<i>Innovative Partnerships</i>	15
<i>Spotlight</i>	17
<i>Inspired Action</i>	20
<i>Income and Expenses/Financials</i>	20



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 grant was awarded in Nov 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

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia's mission is to build a trauma-informed community by strengthening its awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and their impact. This includes empowering victims of family violence through advocacy, community partnerships, and providing safe and hopeful environments that promote economic and family stability. Like many areas of rural Georgia, Waycross understands the importance of mental health and suicide prevention services with the impact of Covid-19 and plans to develop training and programs to address both. In providing these trainings through our service providers and community partners, youth, parents, Law Enforcement, and First Responders, we will be able to promote resiliency in the Waycross Judicial Circuit through a unified trauma informed response. Additionally, Waycross is developing the Family Justice Center as a multi-agency, cross-sector service center to facilitate care for victims of interpersonal violence in one location. Visit our website to learn more at <https://www.waycrossareashelter.com/> and follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MagnoliaHouseShelter/>.



Summary

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia's goal is to create a community response through cross-sectored partnership throughout the six counties; it serves to provide a trauma-informed response to ACEs by:

- Family Justice Center partnerships with judicial sectors, law enforcement officers, parents, and school systems
- Address substance abuse effects on families through prevention and awareness training
- Develop programming in schools to prevent and address suicide through training and bullying with the Waycross Police Department
- Offer behavioral health services to sexually exploited children and children who have been exposed to other violence such as Domestic Violence, abuse, and neglect
- Provide a trauma informed approach to families for raising healthy children in safe, stable, nurturing environments
- Educate and engage community members, raising awareness of intergenerational ACEs

The Waycross area incorporates several low-income, single-parent homes, with little to no transportation. Waycross Area Resilient Georgia has allowed us to collaborate and network with other resources while targeting but not limited to this population. We have been able to target populations including foster children and families as well as people living in recovery.

Leadership Team and Contributors

Michelle Girtman

Executive Director, Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a Magnolia House

Heather M. Flowers

Family Justice Site Coordinator, Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a Magnolia House

Lucille Husbands

Fiscal/HR/Admin Manager, Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc. d/b/a Magnolia House



Coalition Partners

Georgia Family Connections Region 12 (Bacon, Brantley, Charlton, Pierce, and Ware Counties)

Magnolia House

Southeast Health District/CDC

Action Pact

Head Start and Early Head Start (Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Brantley, Candler, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Jeff Davis, Pierce, Toombs, and Ware Counties)

CASA

Education Talent Search

Unison Behavioral Health

Ware County Board of Education

Waycross Family Justice Center

Waycross Police Department

Waycross Middle School

Southside Christian School

George Washington Carver 9th Grade Academy (Coffee County)

St. George Elementary (Charlton County)



Resilient GEORGIA



Messages from Leadership and/or Partners with the Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership

The definition of resilient is "able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions" and I feel Resilient Georgia has been that for so many people within our community. During difficult times or times of need... Resilient Georgia has stepped in to be a shoulder, a resource, and an inspiration. I have been fortunate to partner with Resilient Georgia on several occasions this past year from Teen Maze to "Chalk It Up" to the "I AM" to just name a few. It has been an honor and privilege to be a part of the work that Resilient Georgia has poured into our community, especially our children. Thank you, Resilient Georgia! - Ambi L. Bess, MS Health Promotion Coordinator, Office of Health Promotion

THANK YOU for your partnership and support of Brantley County's children, youth, and families.



Educator Steven Anderson said it best “Alone we are smart. Together we are brilliant.” and this truly describes the Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership with Brantley County Family Connection. Together we have brought prevention education regarding ACEs and substance abuse prevention including information on the Waycross Family Justice Center plans to our youth and community. Together, as a unified front, we have provided our youth and community with hope and a connection with agencies that truly care about them and their future. Again, thank you! - Laura W. Kelley, Executive Advisor, Brantley County Family Connection

Ware County Schools' central area of focus is the safety and well-being of our students and staff. Absent a safe and supportive learning environment led by healthy adults, we cannot hope to effectively educate our children. We are working intently to build resiliency in students and have pooled resources to underscore that effort, including fostering a strong partnership with Waycross Area Resilient Georgia. Through various programs Heather Flowers has brought in, we are seeing families learn, students thrive, and our community positively impacted. We look forward to continuing this partnership in the years to come and count it as essential to our mission of equipping families and students with skills they need beyond academics. - Paige Coker, Ed.S., Director of Special Projects, [Ware County Schools](#)

To: Resilient Georgia, thank you for all the information you provide and the services you provide to the city of Waycross, GA. I had the honor of doing a teen maze with Heather Flowers. I listened to the information she gave the middle school kids. They were familiar with it because a few weeks before Heather and her team were in the school, they did a wonderful job where the kids were able to chalk about their feelings and learn about suicide prevention. Resilient Georgia also helped with door prizes at National Faith and Blue weekend. Which is where the local law enforcement comes together with the faith-based community. At the event Resilient Georgia set up a table with information and shared it with the community. Resilient Georgia was also so kind to bring a lunch and learn to a Woman’s Recovery center to educate the women about trauma, suicide awareness, and domestic violence. Thank you for wearing so many different hats in the community. -Sincerely, Stephanie Adams, Bethesda Recovery

"Waycross Area Resilient Georgia has brought adverse childhood experiences and their impact to the forefront in our community. Across the community the work of our collaborative partners reflects the efforts to raise awareness for this issue. I believe that we can say without a doubt that Waycross is a trauma informed community." - Gail Seifert, Coordinator, Ware Children's Initiative

One of the highest priorities of the Waycross Police Department is youth outreach. Without the assistance of Resilient Georgia, we would fall short in the education of youth concerning gang prevention and anti-bullying. The Waycross Police Department's Junior Police Academy and Junior Police Auxiliary, our main educational avenues, lives in part, because of Resilient Georgia. - Tommy A. Cox, Jr., Chief of Police, Waycross Police Department



Key Impacts/Accomplishments

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership had an opportunity to begin building a trauma informed community and strengthen awareness around adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). We have built upon our community's strong partnerships and provided new opportunities for these agencies to work together towards increasing resilience in the families across our service area. We have created a community response by building partnerships between family justice center partners, judicial and law enforcement officers, education and parent networks, youth and afterschool programs, and civic and religious groups to create a trauma informed community and multi-disciplinary team approach.

- Health: Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and effects on families
- Education: Suicide Prevention, Bullying
- Child Advocacy: Stewards of Children, Safe Dating
- Trauma Informed Community Response: Trained First Responders, School Social Workers, Family and Children Social Workers, Family Connection Partnerships, and other Key Partners on importance of creating a Trauma Informed Multi-Disciplinary Team Approach.



Just a few of our 2022 Youth Events sponsored by Resilient Georgia or a representative from Waycross Area Resilient Georgia spoke at:

1. Jr. Police Academy (Waycross Police Department and Brantley County)
144 attendees
2. Camp Reveille with YMCA (Brantley, Charlton, Pierce, and Ware)



- 100 attendees
3. Tackling Mental Health with Adrian Peterson (Ware County)
1,500 attendees
 4. Brantley County Youth Leadership: Appreciating Adversity
48 attendees
 5. "Let's Chalk About It" Suicide Prevention and Bullying Awareness (Ware and Coffee County)
1,390 attendees
 6. Teen Maze (Ware County 6, 7, and 8 graders)
1,400 attendees
 7. My Life Matter, I am Resilient. (Southside Christian School, Ware County)
90 attendees

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia has provided trainings, prevention and awareness events, and presentations to **4,672** youth in the Waycross Judicial Circuit as of November 11, 2022.



**I AM RESILIENT
BORN TO BE
BRILLIANT**





Description of Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)- Related Efforts



Prevention/Intervention

- Waycross Area Resilient Georgia partnered Ware County Children's Initiative in September 2022 during Suicide prevention month to implement a city wide "Let's Chalk About It" week. "Let's Chalk About It" is all about ending the stigma associated with talking about suicide, opening conversations, raising awareness for mental health, and struggling with normalcy for most of us at certain times in our lives. A meeting place for the bereaved, an occasion for community, connection, compassion, hope and love. All



we needed to do was allow our community along with our youth an opportunity to gather up, remind them that ***“My Life Matters, I am Resilient”*** and chalk about it.

- Waycross Area Resilient Georgia has been invited to represent on the **Ware Well Teen** in Ware County. Ware Well Teen is a prevention campaign that addresses self-harm and suicide and raises awareness for mental health resources to keep kids healthy and resilient. In addition, the campaign provides both students and parents information on how to access help in a rural environment challenged by a shortage of mental health professionals.

“Let’s Chalk About It”: Waycross Middle School (Ware County) 09/23/2022 and George Washington Carver 9th Grade Academy (Coffee County) 10/28/2022. A total of 1,200 students and 190 staff/volunteers/families were present for these events.





Advocacy and Policy

- **Waycross Area Resilient Georgia** is actively engaged with multiple organizations within the Waycross Judicial Circuit including the Alliance for Hope International. The Alliance created a model that calls for efficient and effective co-located multi-disciplinary service delivery for domestic violence and sexual assault survivors and their children. The Family Justice Center has been recognized as a best practice model by the US Department of Justice.
- Waycross Area Resilient Georgia is a member of the Waycross Domestic Violence Task Force and the Brantley County Sexual Violence Task Force.

Strategic Planning Event with Alliance for Hope International: February 8-9, 2022



WAYCROSS FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER
STRATEGIC PLANNING WAYCROSS, GEORGIA FEBRUARY 8-9, 2022





Personal Commitments made by our partners:

I commit my time to planning and being an active partner through planning well after establishment. I am committed to helping families have hope. I will help spread the word about the Family Justice Center. —**Hannah Davis, Unison**

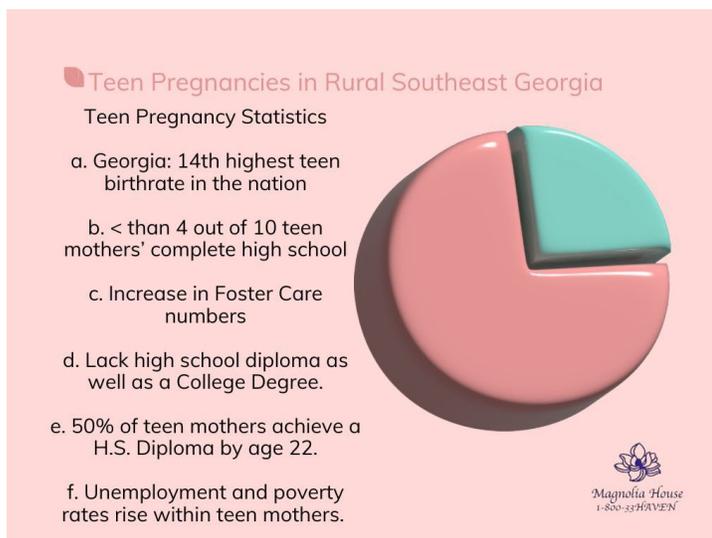
I will be a voice for the vision, a people connector, serve on a work group, listen, and learn, make sure the school system is aware and engaged, and hold hope for others when hope is low. —**Loren Rae Grace, BOE**

I will commit to continuing to improve communication with partners in the FJC and make operational improvements or changes if needed at the Waycross Police Department. —**Danny Hampton, WPD**

I will personally and professionally commit to volunteer services or participate where the need is. While I am involved in juvenile justice, I hope that this service center will prevent youth from coming through the agency I represent. —**Misty Mercer, DJJ**

Research

- **Magnolia House/Waycross Area Resilient Georgia** was invited to attend an interview with CDC on Teen Pregnancies in Rural Southeast Georgia. Prior to the interview we conducted research into Teen Pregnancy within the Waycross Judicial Circuit.





Training

- **Waycross Area Resilient Georgia organized quarterly and annual Law Enforcement Trainings in the Waycross Judicial Circuit. We organized the Sexual Assault, Strangulation, and Criminal Gang Updates Training on June 28, 2022, with 86 attendees.** The session was led by Heather Williams, MSN, RN, SANE-A. Heather currently serves as the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Coordinator at The Refuge Center located in Vidalia, Georgia. She has had the opportunity to educate local law enforcement, medical providers, and her community about the dangers of strangulation and advocate for the appropriate patient assessment and treatment that is necessary after a strangulation event. Captain Trent Gibbs is the Special Operations Commander for the Waycross Police Department. He is a Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) approved instructor for generalized subjects as well as firearms and defensive tactics. The Special Operation Section which Captain Gibbs commands is currently responsible for in-depth investigations involving crimes that are gang motivated. Cpt. Gibbs and his section have investigated many gangs motivated and related crimes. The 8 P.O.S.T hour evidence-based training was hosted at the Ware County Transportation Department Training Room. Heather M. Flowers, FJC Site Coordinator, introduced the “Handle with Care” Project and explained the importance of implementing this program in the Waycross Judicial Circuit. This opportunity was promoted to Waycross Area Resilient Georgia coalition members, Law Enforcement/First Responders, Community Partnership- Ware Children’s Initiative, Pierce County and Charlton County Family Connection collaborative members, social workers, counselors, and advocates through Magnolia House Facebook page, email, and community partnerships. Eighty-six attendees completed the training that day.





- Lane Pease Hendricks, Director of Programs and Partnerships at **Kate’s Club** and Liz Carson, State Outreach Manager, were invited to present to school counselors, social workers, mental health counselors, victim advocates, and CASA employees on July 26, 2022. The topic of the presentation was **“Supporting the Grieving Student”**. The attendees learned about developmental grief responses and considerations that influence grief within the family. Special considerations for deaths due to homicide, suicide, or substance use. Unique experiences of grief due to COVID Resilience and post-traumatic growth after a death loss and how to promote resiliency. Concrete ways to support students in their school or program (strategies, interventions, and use of an Individual Bereavement Plan). Evaluations that were collected showed that the attendees agreed that the topic was helpful and informative.



Innovative Partnerships

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia has partnered with the Waycross Family Justice Center. The Family Justice Center model will build upon our community’s strong partnerships and provide new opportunities for collaboration and innovation. The Family Justice Center will be a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary, co-located center that provides services to victims of interpersonal violence. Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Child Advocacy, and Elder Abuse is not just an issue for the individual or their families, but an issue that has the magnitude to have negative impacts on our society. It has the impact to affect millions of people each year in the United States increasing criminal and public health problem. Violence is not prejudice, it is in every socioeconomic group, regardless of race or ethnicity, age, gender, or sexual orientation. The



Waycross Family Justice Center has the potential to make a significant, positive impact on the Waycross Judicial Circuit by enhancing safety, increasing inter-agency coordination, and preventing further Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Child Abuse and Elder Abuse. This level of capability will enable us to offer more services to our victims we serve, awareness to our community, and efforts to ensure equality.

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council presented the Waycross Family Justice Center with the 2022 Georgia Crime Victim Service Collaborative and Innovative Project Award.



The Waycross Family Justice Executive Committee was invited to attend the 4th Annual North Carolina Family Justice Center Conference.



Partnered with Alliance for Hope International <https://www.allianceforhope.com/> for a 2 day Strategic Planning Event to build a Hope Centered Family Justice Center for the Waycross Judicial Circuit . Counties represented: Bacon, Brantley, Charlton, Coffee, Pierce and Ware.

Participants included mental health professionals, educators, counselors, social workers, law enforcement, elected officials, advocates, court personnel, and community members. Style of the presentation included group discussions, videos/testimonies, and breakout sessions.

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnering with Waycross Family Justice Center's Strategic Planning
February 8-9, 2022

Commitment Opportunity - according to written commitments we collected at the event, participants found the Strategic Planning materials/themes/examples helpful and informative when making their decision to commit to working in the future work groups and steering committees.

Next Steps/Future - Waycross Family Justice Center has demonstrated a strong interest in continuing to partner with our coalition on events that relate to victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Child Advocacy and their families.

Spotlight



"Empowering youth through self love, skill development, critical awarness, and opportunity."

Magnolia House
Waycross Area Shelter for Abused Persons, Inc.

WARE CHILDREN'S INITIATIVE
family connection

"I AM"

"Empowering youth through self-love, skill development, critical awareness, and opportunity."



**AMIYAH
ELAM**

Contact

+912-816-2479

iamwarecounty@gmail.com

FOUNDER & PRESIDENT

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Amiyah Elam and I am the 16 year old founder and president of "I AM". "I AM" is a non profit project made for adolescent black young women lead by young black women. The project was established in 2021 after I was hired to be a camp counselor at Camp Reveille hosted by the YMCA of Waycross. After meeting young girls at camp and learning of their at home situations, I knew that my influence in their lives could not be temporary. A few days later, I called Mrs Gail Seifert and under the guidance of the Ware Childrens Initiative, I AM was born. A few months into fruition we decided to become a cooperative project with Resilient Georgia through the Magnolia House and Mrs Heather Flowers. With Mrs Gail and Mrs Flowers mentoring me throughout the year, I worked alongside the founding members of our new Board of Directors, all young women like me that specialize in certain areas of the program to make the best opportunities possible for the girls involved.

Why the name "I AM"?

I selected the name "I AM" because the phrase truly has no limit. Often in life, women are TOLD who they are and where they will be, but in I AM we are teaching our futures leaders that they define their futures. They are able to identify who they are not simply through affirmations, but information on how to make the most out of their future. I am positive that they will gain learnings of a lifetime in our program.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amiyah Elam".

Amiyah Elam





Inspired Action

- Upcoming Events:
 - 1.) Tackling Mental Health with Adrian Peterson
November 29-30, and December 1, 2022
Locations: Brantley County, Pierce County, Ware County, and Charlton County Schools
 - 2.) Countywide Partners Meeting and Law Enforcement Training
December 9, 2022, at 8:00 to 4:30 p.m.
Location: Hoboken Community Center, 1301 Washington Street, Hoboken, GA 31542
- You can visit our website to learn more at <https://www.waycrossareashelter.com/> and follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MagnoliaHouseShelter/>.

Income and Expenses/Financials

Waycross Area Resilient Georgia Partnership Financial Report attached as Appendix A.



WAYCROSS AREA RESILIENT GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP



**Your Dollars
At Work**

\$90,071.60

Totals as of November 16, 2022

Match Amount: Salary, In-Kind,
\$112,736.39

Revenue: Resilient Georgia Grant \$100,000.00

Expenses:

- Prevention/Intervention \$ 39,241.02**
- Advocacy and Policy \$ 17,104.56**
- Training \$ 9,666.30**
- Awareness \$ 19,059.72**
- Administrative Fees \$ 5,000.00**
- Total Expenses: \$ 90,071.60**

Net Assets, As of 11/16/2022 \$ 9,928.40

Resilient Georgia made it possible to provide advocacy and training to our community partners, victims, youth, and families during the planning and development phase of the Waycross Family Justice Center.

12, 566

Service providers, community partners, youth, parents, First Responders, advocates, and victims have received education and awareness through our community engagement.