November 2026

Impact IN ACTION



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On the cover: Douglas cuts the ribbon at Wheeler Park, Oct. 16. Story on page 2.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION *of* Central Georgia

Wheeler Park Comes Full Circle

Curtis Farrar and Francis Lott did not live to see the new pavilion at Wheeler Park. Both of them are part of it.



The Farrar family at the Wheeler Park pavilion ribbon cutting, Oct. 16, 2026.

On October 16, Douglas gathered at noon to cut the ribbon on the pavilion, a moment seven years in the making. Getting there took two leaders with a big idea, a town that kept showing up, and the patience to start over twice.

Two men who loved Douglas

Francis Lott was an architect, business leader, and developer with a passion for economic development. Douglas sits about 50 miles from an interstate in any direction, and Francis believed the town's leaders had to take the initiative themselves because, as he put it, "no one is coming for us." He established a fund at the Community Foundation of Coffee County, an affiliate of the Community Foundation of Central Georgia, to support economic development in the county.

Curtis Farrar, a second-generation Douglas attorney who helped create General Coffee State Park, made his case more quietly. He wanted people to think big, and then invest to make it happen. He supported a bus tour that took 30 Douglas leaders to Macon to see what was working there in downtown housing and park redevelopment.

Those leaders came home with ideas. In 2019, the Foundation and the City of Douglas worked with Interface Studio on a master plan for Wheeler Park. Residents told planners exactly what they wanted: a better playground, a wider walking path, and a refreshed shelter. They loved the shade of the tall pines, but not the needles and roots underfoot.

Twice, the work stopped

COVID-19 stalled the plan almost immediately, yet the park was busier than ever. Families needed somewhere to go, and civic clubs moved their meetings outdoors to Wheeler Park. So the Foundation launched a "pop-up summer" of small projects pulled straight from the plan. Children from the Boys and Girls Club painted rocks and hid them around the park. Hammocks went up on the quieter side. A local artist created an interactive public art piece, and Keep Douglas Beautiful volunteers built Little Free Libraries in four city parks.

> The storm took every pine tree we had, but it also gave us the chance to plant a canopy that will shade this park for the next hundred years.
>
> **— Kevin Koeppler, board member and General Manager, Sunbelt Greenhouses**

With momentum back, the Foundation and the City turned to the community's top request: the playground. The City refreshed the original equipment and added new sidewalks, and the Foundation purchased two new pieces of play equipment. They were installed in September 2024, with a ribbon cutting set for the following week.

Then Hurricane Helene struck. The storm damaged the new playground, leveled the park's pine canopy, and destroyed the shelter the Douglas Lions Club built in 1957.

Rebuilding with intention

The partners did not simply put back what was lost. Board member Kevin Koeppler, General Manager of Sunbelt Greenhouses, led the replanting, and Hahira Nursery provided 63 new trees, each chosen for its species and placement.

The playground was repaired and restored. The old shelter gave way to a new pavilion, built from the ground up on level ground near the playground, tennis court, and restrooms. It overlooks a green space made for concerts and ceremonies. The Douglas Lions Club, which built the original shelter nearly 70 years ago, stepped up again to support the rebuild.



The new pavilion, designed by Isabel Humphries, with the restored playground behind it.

The full-circle moment

The first grant from Curtis Farrar's bequest to the Foundation helped build the pavilion.

Its designer is Isabel Humphries, who is in her final year of Georgia Tech's Master of Architecture program. Her mother, Melissa Humphries, chairs the Foundation's board and helped lead the project. Francis Lott, a proud Georgia Tech alumnus, regularly wrote recommendation letters for Douglas students applying to his alma mater. The last letter he wrote before he passed away was for Isabel. Years later, she designed the pavilion in a style that draws on his own architectural work.

What Douglas showed

In September, the Wheeler Park story was shared at the Georgia Grantmakers Alliance Annual Meeting in Tifton as a model for rural philanthropy. The lesson is a simple one: the community did not give up.

"The revitalization of this park has been led by volunteers and partnerships through a pandemic and a hurricane," Melissa Humphries said. "We are proud to introduce the improved Wheeler Park back to the community."

Curtis Farrar's gift and Francis Lott's last letter are still at work in Douglas, in a pavilion where the next generation will gather.

SEVEN YEARS AT WHEELER PARK

2019
Master plan with residents and Interface Studio

2020
COVID-19 stalls the plan; a "pop-up summer" keeps it moving

Sept. 2024
New playground equipment installed

Sept. 2024
Hurricane Helene levels the pines and the 1957 shelter

Oct. 16, 2026
The new pavilion opens

The Bridge Between Surviving and Thriving

Twenty-one nonprofits receive more than $350,000 through the fall 2026 Nonprofit Grant Program



Fall 2026 grant recipients gather at Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia, Oct. 8.

$350,000+	21	Since 1993
in grants this fall	Central Georgia nonprofits	funded by donors' legacy gifts

Have you ever tried to make a major decision when your stomach is louder than your mind?

Darius Maynard asked that question on Oct. 8, standing before nonprofit leaders, board members, and community partners at Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia. The day before, at a Macon Cares gathering at the Tubman African American Museum, he had heard a speaker explain why some young people turn to guns: they are focused on surviving today, not on a future they cannot see.

"Those words stuck with me," said Maynard, Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives at the Community Foundation of Central Georgia. "I think about kids who are sleeping on the floor, who can't dream about their future because they're worried about where they'll lay their heads tonight. I think about kids who've had adults walk out of their lives and are just trying to get through the day. And I think about kids who are hungry."

The room had gathered to celebrate this fall's grant recipients, and many of their projects answer the needs Maynard named.

A bed, a mentor, a meal

Volunteers with Sleep in Heavenly Peace's Macon chapter will build and deliver beds for local children who do not have one. Eight grants support mentoring, advocacy, and youth leadership. Central Georgia CASA will train 40 new volunteer advocates, more than doubling its capacity to stand with children in foster care, with a focus on teens ages 14 to 17. Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia will bring programming to girls in Bibb County who do not have a troop leader, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Heart of Georgia will connect students with mentors, employers, and colleges as they plan for life after graduation. In schools across Bibb, Baldwin, and Monroe counties, Best Buddies will pair students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities in one-to-one friendships.



Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Heart of Georgia receives its $23,000 grant.

Meals on Wheels of Middle Georgia will work to shorten its waiting list of homebound seniors, and in Upson County, Mt. Zion Baptist Church will open a rural food pantry with a goal of serving 480 households.

Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia, the evening's host, is building a 56-bed transitional home where men who complete its 12-month recovery program can keep building stability. Depaul USA will continue offering meals, showers, health care, and housing support to people experiencing homelessness in Macon, and Crisis Line & Safe House of Central Georgia will help survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault with rent, new locks, and transportation. The Arc Macon will help 85 families across seven counties navigate disability services, Medicaid waivers, and special education.

Some grants invest in the places people share. In downtown Eastman, the Coach John M. Peacock Foundation will turn an underused alley between Main and King streets into a shaded walkway with seating, art, and pollinator plants.

Where the gifts come from

The Nonprofit Grant Program exists because of donors who have left gifts to the Community Foundation since 1993.

"Those donors trusted our board to know where the greatest needs and opportunities are," said Julia Wood, Senior Vice President of Development and Donor Services. "It is an honor to use those resources wisely to make a difference in our community."

Maynard closed the event with a charge to everyone in the room.

> *"If there is one message I can leave with you, it is this: continue to be the bridge between surviving and thriving for this community," he said. "Together, as one community, you have the capacity and the resources to help people see there is a future in store for them."*

Learn how to leave a legacy gift →

FALL 2026

Nonprofit Grant Recipients

Best Buddies in Georgia	**$7,000**
Bibb Mt. Zion Baptist Church	**$23,000**
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Heart of Georgia	**$23,000**
Central Georgia CASA	**$20,000**
Central Georgia Council, Boy Scouts of America	**$18,000**
Coach John M. Peacock Foundation	**$15,000**
Crisis Line & Safe House of Central Georgia	**$22,000**
Depaul USA	**$20,000**
Family Advancement Ministries	**$15,000**
Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia	**$23,000**
I Am Kali	**$8,000**
Joining Our Youth	**$20,000**
Leadership Macon Endowment Fund	**$22,000**
Little Disciples Educational Services	**$3,750**
Macon Hope, First Tee Middle Georgia	**$8,000**
Meals on Wheels of Middle Georgia	**$20,800**
Mother's Nest	**$13,000**
Mt. Zion Baptist Church (Upson County)	**$18,500**
Rescue Mission of Middle Georgia	**$23,000**
Sleep in Heavenly Peace, Macon Chapter	**$8,000**
The Arc Macon	**$19,000**
Total	**$350,050**

Small Grants, Full Days

How High Five grants are helping students make it to school and families make it through hard seasons



Students in a Communities In Schools of Central Georgia time management session with their new alarm clocks.

For many elementary students in Central Georgia, the school day can be lost before it begins. If a child sleeps through the morning and misses the bus, there is often no other way to get to school. One missed bus becomes one missed day.

Communities In Schools of Central Georgia saw that pattern play out across the seven elementary schools it serves, and the answer turned out to be simple: alarm clocks. With a $4,320 High Five grant, CIS purchased 100 alarm clocks and began teaching students how to use them, including how to set the clock, what time to go to bed, and what time to get up to catch the bus.

It worked, and one student showed just how much. Taryn Collinsworth, Chief Executive Officer at CIS, shared the story of a child who began using the alarm clock to wake up and get every younger sibling to school on time. When that student moved on to middle school, which starts at a different time, the younger siblings began arriving late or missing school again. One alarm clock had been holding the whole morning together.

> One alarm clock had been holding the whole morning together.

CIS took that lesson and built on it. The alarm clocks are now at the center of a time management program for students who have been arriving late. In a recent session, the teacher started with the basics, making sure every child could tell time before setting a clock. Then the lesson moved to the day ahead: if school breakfast is served until 7:30, students need to be there by 7:30 to eat.

That is the idea behind High Five. Through the program, a nonprofit can submit up to three requests totaling no more than $5,000, each one funded through a fund at the Community Foundation of Central Georgia. The requests cover the practical needs that make daily work possible and are often the hardest to find money for.

At Family Counseling Center of Central Georgia, two High Five grants went to work in very different ways.

A $500 High Five grant helped FCC create 100 emotional regulation therapy packs for children in counseling: activity journals, crayons, and stress-relief balls packed in drawstring bags. For a child who struggles to put hard feelings into words, a journal and a box of crayons can be where the conversation starts.

One 15-year-old girl came to FCC dealing with anxiety, low self-confidence, and challenges at home and at school. Through counseling and creative activities, she learned to express what she was feeling and to cope in healthier ways. Over time, her relationships improved, she became more engaged in school, and her grades went up. She also began to believe in herself and in her future.



Family Counseling Center of Central Georgia staff with supplies for its therapy packs and family case management kits.

A $750 High Five grant helped FCC assemble more than 50 case management kits with diapers, wipes, hygiene products, and other necessities for families with young children. Each kit covers a family's needs for two to three days, easing the pressure while FCC's case managers connect families with longer-term help.

One young mother came to FCC unable to afford basic necessities for herself and her children. Along with essential supplies, she was connected with partner nonprofits for ongoing assistance. The kit met the need in front of her. The connections gave her family a path toward stability.

> *An alarm clock. A coloring journal. A pack of diapers. None of them would make headlines. But for a student trying to make the bus, a teenager learning to name what she feels, and a mother trying to get through the week, they are where the change begins.*

FOR DONOR ADVISED FUNDHOLDERS

This Year's High Five Catalog Is Coming

Next week, CFCG will release this year's High Five catalog to donor advised fundholders, featuring requests from nonprofits across Central Georgia. Keep an eye on your inbox. The next alarm clock, journal, or care kit could start with your fund.

Learn more about High Five →

WHAT A HIGH FIVE CAN DO

$4,320

100 alarm clocks

Communities In Schools of Central Georgia

$500

100 therapy packs

Family Counseling Center of Central Georgia

$750

50+ case management kits

Family Counseling Center of Central Georgia

Giving Well in 2026

What's new this year, what hasn't changed, and how to make your gifts count before December 31

Every December, people across Central Georgia sit down at the kitchen table with a checkbook and a short list of the causes that matter most to them. This year, the rules behind those gifts are different. Here's what to know, and how to make your giving count.

What's New This Year

If you take the standard deduction, your gifts can now count. Starting with 2026, you can deduct up to $1,000 in cash gifts ($2,000 for married couples) without itemizing. One thing that surprises many donors: gifts to donor advised funds don't qualify. Many of our other funds may be a good fit, including unrestricted funds, scholarship funds, and organizational endowment funds that support a local nonprofit for good.

If you itemize, there's now a floor. Each year, 0.5% of your adjusted gross income (AGI) sets the floor: gifts up to that amount aren't deductible, and everything you give above it is. For example, with an AGI of $100,000, the floor is $500, so a $5,000 gift gives you a $4,500 deduction. In the top tax bracket, each dollar you deduct above the floor now saves at most 35 cents.

What Hasn't Changed

Gifts of stock are still one of the smartest ways to give. Giving shares you've held more than a year avoids capital gains tax on their growth. Keeping that gain off your return can also help keep Medicare premiums down, since higher-income retirees pay more.

A donor advised fund still lets you give now and decide later. Make one gift this year, then recommend grants over time.

Your IRA can still give directly. At 70½ or older, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) sends up to $111,000 this year straight from your IRA to charity, tax-free, and can satisfy your required minimum distribution. Timing matters:

- **Give before you take your required withdrawal.** A QCD made afterward can't undo that income.
- **Start early.** The gift counts when money leaves your IRA, and processing can take weeks.
- **Using IRA checks?** One deposited in January may count for next year.

Five Steps Before December 31

1. **Call your advisor this month.** Stock and IRA gifts take longer, so start those first.
2. **Mind the mail.** A postmark may now show when your letter was processed, not when you mailed it. Mail early, get a dated receipt at the counter, or give online.
3. **Keep your thank-you letters.** For gifts of $250 or more, the letter must say whether you received anything in return. Donors have lost deductions over that one sentence.
4. **Give in someone's honor.** We'll let them know you thought of them.
5. **Think beyond this year.** Leaving part of your IRA to a Community Foundation fund may be your most tax-smart legacy gift. Your children would generally pay income tax on IRA money they inherit; a charitable fund pays none. It takes one beneficiary form.

Giving That Stays Home

National research this fall found that small, community-based nonprofits are among the hardest hit by this year's shifts in government and corporate funding. That's where local giving matters most. This fall, our unrestricted funds made possible more than $350,000 in grants to 21 Central Georgia nonprofits. Whatever form your gift takes, it helps your neighbors in the 21 counties we serve. We'd welcome the chance to talk with you.

CONTACT US

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Find Out More About Starting A Fund →

As always, donors should consult their financial advisor, CPA, or tax professional regarding their specific circumstances before implementing any charitable giving strategy.

FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS

Year One Under the New Rules

The Year-End Conversations Worth Having With Clients in 2026

Your clients have heard that charitable giving "changed" this year, but most won't feel it until they file their 2026 return next spring. By then, the window to plan will have closed. Here are four conversations worth having before December 31.

> Most won't feel it until they file their 2026 return next spring. By then, the window to plan will have closed.

1 · The Client Who Takes the Standard Deduction

For the first time, these clients can deduct charitable gifts without itemizing: up to $1,000 single or $2,000 joint, on top of the standard deduction. The gift must be cash to a public charity, and gifts to donor advised funds do not count. Cash gifts to many Community Foundation funds may qualify; call us to find the right fit.

2 · The Client Who Owns a Business

Starting in 2026, a C corporation can deduct only the charitable gifts above 1% of its taxable income. On $1 million of taxable income, the first $10,000 given produces no deduction. For a local business that gives a modest amount every year, that may be most of its giving.

$10,000 given with no deduction on $1 million of taxable income under the new 1% corporate floor

The fix is bunching. The business makes one larger gift to a fund at the Community Foundation, clears the floor, and then recommends grants to the local organizations it already supports, on the same schedule as always. Owners of pass-through businesses generally claim gifts personally, where the 0.5% individual floor applies instead.

3 · The Client in the Top Bracket

For 37% bracket clients, what remains after the 0.5% floor is worth at most 35 cents per dollar. That makes appreciated stock more valuable. Giving long-held shares avoids capital gains tax, and the cap doesn't touch that benefit.

4 · The Client Who Is 70½ or Older

For these clients, the best answer got better. A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) sends up to $111,000 per person in 2026 straight from an IRA to charity, outside taxable income, so the floor and cap don't apply. The mechanics are where year-end QCDs go wrong:

- Do the QCD first. The first dollars out of an IRA count toward the RMD. A QCD made after the RMD is taken can't undo that income.
- The date that counts is when the money leaves the IRA. Custodian cutoffs often fall well before December 31.
- Watch IRA checkbooks. A check deposited in January may count toward 2027.

A QCD can't fund a donor advised fund, but it can go to our designated, scholarship, organizational endowment, and unrestricted funds.

FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS

2026 at a Glance

RULE	2026
QCD annual limit (per IRA owner)	**$111,000**
One-time QCD to a charitable gift annuity or remainder trust	**$55,000**
QCD eligibility age / RMD starting age	**70½ / 73**
Non-itemizer cash gift deduction	**$1,000 single / $2,000 joint** (no donor advised funds)
Individual itemizer floor	**0.5% of AGI**
Top-bracket deduction value cap	**35%**
Corporate charitable deduction floor / ceiling	**1% / 10% of taxable income**
Standard deduction	**$16,100 single / $32,200 joint**
Written acknowledgment required	**Gifts of $250 or more**
2027 figures	Not yet released by the IRS; we'll share them when available

Before December 31

Gifts of stock and wires take time to arrive, so start early and call us with questions. For grants that need to reach nonprofits by December 31, fundholders should recommend them by 10 a.m. on Wednesday, December 16. Encourage clients to mail checks early; a postmark may now reflect when mail is processed, not when it was dropped off. And while you're reviewing year-end paperwork, check the client's IRA beneficiary form. Heirs generally owe income tax on withdrawals from an inherited traditional IRA; a charitable fund owes none. Naming a CFCG fund for a share of the account is often the most tax-efficient legacy gift a client can make.

As always, donors should consult their financial advisor, CPA, or tax professional regarding their specific circumstances before implementing any charitable giving strategy.

A Local Partner

Since 1993, we've helped Central Georgia advisors and their clients turn generosity into lasting local impact. We know the region's nonprofits, and we offer a wide range of fund types: donor advised, scholarship, organizational endowment, designated, and unrestricted funds, among others. Whatever a client hopes to accomplish, we're confident they'll find a fit. We'll handle the details so you can stay focused on your client.

TALK WITH US

Julia Wood
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Refer a Client to CFCG →

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION *of* Central Georgia

Your 2026 Year-End Giving Calendar

Dates for donors and fundholders to know before December 31

NOW through mid-Nov.

Start your gifts early

Talk with your advisor; start stock, wire, and IRA (QCD) gifts early.

NOV. 23

MONDAY · 10 A.M.

Recommend donor advised fund grants for Giving Tuesday

Recommend grants by this time for checks mailed November 30, ahead of Giving Tuesday.

DEC. 1

TUESDAY

Giving Tuesday

DEC. 16

WEDNESDAY · 10 A.M.

Last day for grants to reach nonprofits by December 31

Recommend donor advised fund grants by this time. Checks are mailed December 18.

DEC. 30

WEDNESDAY · 10 A.M.

Final grant recommendations for 2026

Checks are mailed December 31 and may arrive in January.

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