

## GEORGIA MOUNTAINS ONE-STOP PARTNERS MEETING

### Minutes

Georgia Mountains One-Stop Partners met on **Tues., May 26th, 2026**, at 11:00 a.m. at the One-Stop Career Center Training Room, 1856 Thompson Bridge Rd. Gainesville, GA 30501. Participants were:

- \*\*Michael Fisher**, Ninth District Opportunity, Street Exit, [MichaelFisher@ndocbg.org](mailto:MichaelFisher@ndocbg.org)
  - Danielle Avelar**, Adult/DW Supervisor, WorkSource Ga. Mountains, [davelar@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:davelar@gmrc.ga.gov)
  - Shannon Cole**, Dean, Lanier Technical College, Adult Education, [scole@laniertach.edu](mailto:scole@laniertach.edu)
  - \*Robin Kamara**, Transition Coordinator, [rkamara@laniertech.edu](mailto:rkamara@laniertech.edu)
  - Levi Koebel**, TSCG (Technical College System of GA), OWD, [LKoebel@TCSG.edu](mailto:LKoebel@TCSG.edu)
  - Shelby Ward**, President/CEO, GA Foothills United Way, [shelby-ward@gafoothills.unitedway.org](mailto:shelby-ward@gafoothills.unitedway.org)
  - Erica McCabe**, Shelter Manager, My Sister's Place, [emccabe@my-sisters-place.org](mailto:emccabe@my-sisters-place.org)
  - Elaine Hortman**, Mentoring Coordinator, Center Point, [elaine@centerpoint.ga.org](mailto:elaine@centerpoint.ga.org).
  - Kelly Williams**, Youth Support Services Program Manager, DFCS, [Kelly.williams@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:Kelly.williams@dhs.ga.gov)
  - Jackie Powers**, Executive Director, Good Samaritan Food Bank, [jackie@cbamissions.com](mailto:jackie@cbamissions.com)
  - \*Alondra Hernandez-Vega**, Family Advocate, Family Promise of Hall Co. [alondra@familypromiseshall.org](mailto:alondra@familypromiseshall.org)
  - \*Joey Rogers**, Hispanic Alliance GA, [jrogers@hispanicalliancega.org](mailto:jrogers@hispanicalliancega.org)
  - Alejandra Luis-Cruz**, Family Advocate, Family Promise, [Alejandra@familypromiseshall.org](mailto:Alejandra@familypromiseshall.org)
  - Jasmin Cruz**, Case Manager, United Way of Hall County, [jcruz@unitedwayhallcounty.org](mailto:jcruz@unitedwayhallcounty.org)
  - Dr. Davis Palmour**, Owner, The Palmour Group, [davispalmour@yahoo.com](mailto:davispalmour@yahoo.com)
  - Jennifer Reagan**, Assistant Director, [familyconnection@habershamschools.com](mailto:familyconnection@habershamschools.com)
  - \*Mercedes Weaver**, Coordinator, Habersham Family Connection, [HFCCoordinator@habershamschools.com](mailto:HFCCoordinator@habershamschools.com)
  - Steven Nissley**, Director, Good News at Noon, [snissley@goodnewsatnoon.org](mailto:snissley@goodnewsatnoon.org)
  - Maria Ryder**, Director, Hall County DFCS, [Maria.Ryder@dhs.ga.gov](mailto:Maria.Ryder@dhs.ga.gov)
  - Shameka Harrison**, Housing Case Manager, Wellroot Family Services, [sharrison@wellroot.org](mailto:sharrison@wellroot.org)
  - \*Viridiana Contreras**, Bilingual Advocate, Bridging Hope, [viridiana@bridginghope.ga.org](mailto:viridiana@bridginghope.ga.org)
  - \*Janel Daly**, Transitional Housing Advocate, Gateway Domestic Violence Center [jdaly@gatewaydvcenter.org](mailto:jdaly@gatewaydvcenter.org)
  - Kathy Amos**, Volunteer, Unity Project, [bantryb@gmail.com](mailto:bantryb@gmail.com)
  - Angela Middleton**, Founder, North GA Black Business Assoc/TBird's Touch, [atmiddleton32@gmail.com](mailto:atmiddleton32@gmail.com)
  - Benjie Hopkins**, One-Stop Operator, Hopkins Associates, [hopkinsassociates77@gmail.com](mailto:hopkinsassociates77@gmail.com)
  - Dr. Marsha Hopkins**, One-Stop Operator, Hopkins Associates, [hopkinsassociates77@gmail.com](mailto:hopkinsassociates77@gmail.com)
- \*New participant attending One-Stop Partnership  
\*\*Guest speaker

### **Welcome and Introductions:**

Benjie Hopkins welcomed everyone, recognized first time attendees, and had everyone introduce themselves.

**Minutes for all Partner meetings:** posted at website: <https://onestopworkgamtns.org/> under 'Our Partners'

**Focus: Unity Project** – Michael Fisher, Dir., Housing/Programs and Street Exit, Ninth District Opportunity. Kathy Amos, community volunteer, and Steven Nissley, Director of Good News at Noon have both been closely involved with the Unity Project. They opened the program with their perspectives about what has transpired so far. They would like to have as many agencies as possible to volunteer. There was an early concentration on getting women out of the encampments because many of them were suffering abuse. Currently, on Wednesdays, lunch is provided, and services are offered to assist individuals who are unhoused. Relationships are being developed. It has become clear to those involved that it is essential for individuals to want a change in their lives. Housing and clothing alone are not the answer. Michael Fisher described the evolution and the status of The Unity Project from his perspective. It has been an effort to bring together resources to provide overnight shelter and other basic services for individuals who are unhoused. Several local encampments have been moved recently, and this has prompted many responses to provide assistance. Many entities have been involved with the Unity Project's development including the City of Gainesville, Good News at Noon, North Georgia Works, Ninth District Opportunity, Brenau University, Northeast Georgia Medical Center, Jay's Place, The Salvation Army, Good News Clinic, United Way of Hall County, community volunteers, and others. A building near Good News at Noon has been used initially, and plans are being made to renovate another building close by for a more permanent facility. The concept is to

have space in a central location for representatives of various organizations to offer needed services. These may include ID recovery, benefits application assistance, job training, food stamps applications, mental and physical health care, counseling, housing assistance, etc. Overnight shelter will be offered, and it will be more like transitional housing. There will be a small fee for this. The need is great. Michael estimated there are between 400 and 500 unsheltered individuals living in this community. There have been many challenges in bringing all the moving parts together for the Unity Project, but there is hope that progress is being made.

**Lunch and Conversations:** Opportunities for collaboration and information exchange among Partners

**Partner Information:**

**WorkSource Georgia Mountains (WSGM), Danielle Avelar, <https://www.gmrc.ga.gov/wsgm>.**

WorkSource Georgia Mountains is a federal grant program that provides funding for education and training to eligible individuals to enhance their current skills or learn a new trade. Funding and program services are also available for Georgians who lose their job as a result of plant closures, mass layoffs, and other effects of the changing economy. For eligibility and intake information: **770 538-2727**

**North Georgia Technical College: <https://northgatech.edu/>** North Georgia Technical College, a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, provides affordable, relevant education and technical training to support community workforce development. NGTC's vision is to elevate the quality of life for the individuals and communities served. Collaboration, integrity, respect, and success are valued. Campuses in Clarkesville, Blairsville, and Currahee.

**Lanier Technical College: Shannon Cole, Robin Kamara, <https://www.laniertech.edu/>** The purpose of Lanier Technical College (LTC) is to meet the workforce development needs of the area by providing technical and adult education to support the economic development and well-being of the people, communities, and companies of Banks, Barrow, Dawson, Forsyth, Hall, Jackson, and Lumpkin counties. LTC prepares people for successful work; therefore, the College plays a major role in their life-long education.

**Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG): Levi Koebel <https://www.tcsg.edu/>** Resource for jobs information: <https://www.worksourceportal.com/> Staff available daily at One-Stop to assist with job searches. **770 538-2727**

**Ninth District Opportunity: Michael Fisher <https://www.ndo.org/>** Providing a broad range of services designed to assist low-income families to establish self-sufficiency and economic stability. All services are outcome orientated based on local community needs. **770 532-3191**

**United Way of Hall County: Jasmin Cruz-Ruiz, <https://www.unitedwayhallcounty.org/>** "To Live Better, We Must Live United" Walk in hours for United Way – Every Thursday from 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. 527 Oak St. Gainesville, GA 30501. **770 536-1121**

**Hall County DFCS: Maria Ryder <https://dfcs.georgia.gov/locations/hall-county>** The Georgia Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) investigates reports of child abuse; finds foster and adoptive homes for abused and neglected children; issues SNAP, Medicaid, and TANF; helps out-of-work parents get back on their feet; and provides numerous support services and innovative programs to help families in need. 970 McEver Rd., Gainesville, GA 30504. **770 532-5298**

**DFCS, Youth Support: Kelly Williams Division of Family and Children Services, Youth Support, GA Department of Human Services <https://dfcs.georgia.gov/> <https://dfcs.georgia.gov/>** Support services for foster youth. **404 693-6172.**

**Good News at Noon: Steven Nissley, <https://www.goodnewsatnoon.org>** The Good News at Noon Transformational Life Program is a 12–18 month program designed to give those who are ready an opportunity for true transformation to occur in their lives. 884 Dorsey St, Gainesville, GA 30501 **770 503-1366**

**Good Samaritan Food Bank: Jackie Powers.** <https://gsfoodministries.com/> GSFB was created to assist and minister to those who are in need. Offers distribution of food, furniture, counseling, job placement training, health screenings and more for individuals and their families. Donations accepted. Open for distribution: Mondays 5-7 PM, Wednesdays 9-11 AM, Fridays 9-11. **770 532-3371**

**Georgia Foothills United Way: Shelby Ward.** <https://gafoothillsunitedway.org/> A 501(c)(3) non profit organization covering Habersham, Stephens, & Rabun Counties with a mission of uniting our community to build a stronger future. Raises and distributes funds to meet the needs of the community. Focus on education, income, and health—the building blocks for a good quality of life and a strong community.

**Hispanic Alliance GA: Joey Rogers,** <https://hispanicalliancega.org/> Striving to empower the Hispanic and Latino community through education, advocacy, and comprehensive support services. Our mission is to remove barriers, expand opportunities, and uplift families so they can achieve stability, growth, and long-term prosperity. Committed to ensuring every member of our community has the resources and representation they need to adapt, integrate, and thrive. 2490 Hilton Drive, Suite AB, Gainesville, Georgia 30501 **678-750-0254**

**Center Point: Elaine Hortman** <https://centerpointga.org/> Seeking adult volunteers to become mentors for students in Hall County schools. Training provided. **770 535-1050.**

**Family Promise, Alejandra Luis-Cruz, Alondra Hernandez-Vega,** <https://www.familypromisehall.org/> “Transforming the lives of families experiencing homelessness” **770 535-0786, ext. 201.**

**Gateway Domestic Violence Center: Janel Daly,** <https://www.gatewaydvcenter.org/> Through crisis intervention, comprehensive support services and community collaboration, Gateway creates an environment for safe violence prevention. **770 536-5860.**

**Bridging Hope: Viridiana Contreras,** <https://www.bridginghopega.org/> Bridging Hope provides a wide range of services to survivors of any type of sexual abuse or assault, no matter when it occurred. Our free and confidential resources are available 24/7 to survivors ages 13 and older, and their loved ones in Dawson, Forsyth, Habersham, Hall, Lumpkin and White County. **770 503-7273 – Crisis Line**

**The Palmour Group: Dr. Davis Palmour,** <https://www.thepalmourgroupp.com/> Focus on personal growth and development for clients. Offers parenting classes and counseling services. **706 455-8421.**

**Wellroot Family Services: Shameka Harrison,** <https://wellroot.org/> Providing evidence-based programs designed to keep families together whenever possible, provide short-term foster families when necessary, and offer housing and wrap-around support to families and transition-age youth. Gainesville Regional Office, 430 Prior Street SE, Gainesville, GA 30501 **770 531-3063.**

**My Sister’s Place: Erica McCabe,** <https://my-sisters-place.org/> Provides a nurturing home, transportation assistance, nutritious meals and other basic necessities to single women and mothers with children. Provides the tools and resources to help these individuals to be in a better position when they leave than when they arrive. **770 532-5111**

**Habersham Family Connection: Mercedes Weaver, Jennifer Reagan,** <https://habersham.gafcp.org/> Habersham County Family Connection brings together community partners to develop, implement, and evaluate plans that address serious challenges faced by our children and families such as child abuse and neglect, school dropout, and physical and mental health disparities. 171 Raider Circle, Mount Airy, GA 30563 **706 491-3541 (text only, please)**

**Unity Project: Kathy Amos,** Volunteer, The Unity Project in Gainesville, GA, is a community-driven initiative uniting local churches, nonprofits, and city partners to provide emergency shelter, meals, and support services for the unhoused population. 881 Dorsey Street, Gainesville, GA

**North GA Black Businesses Association: Angela Middleton, [ngballiance@gmail.com](mailto:ngballiance@gmail.com)** The North Georgia Black Business Alliance (NGBBA), established in 2023, fosters economic empowerment, business growth, and community development among Black-owned businesses. It offers a robust platform for advocacy, support, and networking tailored to the unique needs of Black entrepreneurs in the region.

**One-Stop Career Center: Benjie and Marsha Hopkins, <http://onestopworkgamtns.org/>** 1856 Thompson Br. Rd., Gainesville 8:00 am until 6:00 pm Mon-Fri, call: **770 538-2727** Connections/referrals for Partner services including: WorkSource Ga Mtns., Lanier Tech. College, North Georgia Tech. College, Athens Tech. College, Technical College System of Georgia, Ga. Voc. Rehabilitation Agency, The Legacy Link, plus other organizations in the region. Benjie or Marsha Hopkins, **470 577-0823** or [hopkinsassociates77@gmail.com](mailto:hopkinsassociates77@gmail.com)

**Announcements: Dates for Upcoming Meetings: Our next meeting will be Tues., July 28, 2026 at 11 a.m.**

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:00 p.m.

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