



DeKalb County Human Services

A SPECIAL REPORT

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
THROUGH OUR NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATIONS



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



DeKalb County's Human Services Department is focused on meeting the ever-evolving needs of DeKalb's citizens. The Department's efforts to respond to community challenges are far-reaching and require many hands. The Human Services Grants Program has proudly provided many agencies with the financial resources they need to expand their work to as many people as possible. The program is designed to provide supplemental funding to local non-profits to address a variety of issues in targeted areas of need in DeKalb County.

The Human Services Grants Program has awarded grants to non-profits to fund their work within DeKalb County since 1980. Over the last 41 years, the program has awarded more than \$40 million which has benefited thousands of DeKalb residents. Human Services grants help non-profit agencies do the grass-roots work that brings relief to the people that reach out for help. Food insecurity, refugee supports, senior services, supports for individuals with disabilities, early learning and afterschool programs, behavioral health and mental health counseling, rental and utilities assistance, crisis intervention and domestic violence intervention are just some of the issues these agencies have been able to address with the help of Human Services grant funding.

In 2021, the DeKalb Human Services Grants Program awarded \$907,452 in grant funds to fifty-four (54) agencies that serve children, adults, families, and communities. The Human Services Grants Program is far more than writing a check. The human experience is a dynamic one. It is a journey that is not always easy. The challenges people face can sometimes be daunting and many times overwhelming, impacting children, families, and communities in ways that can last a lifetime.

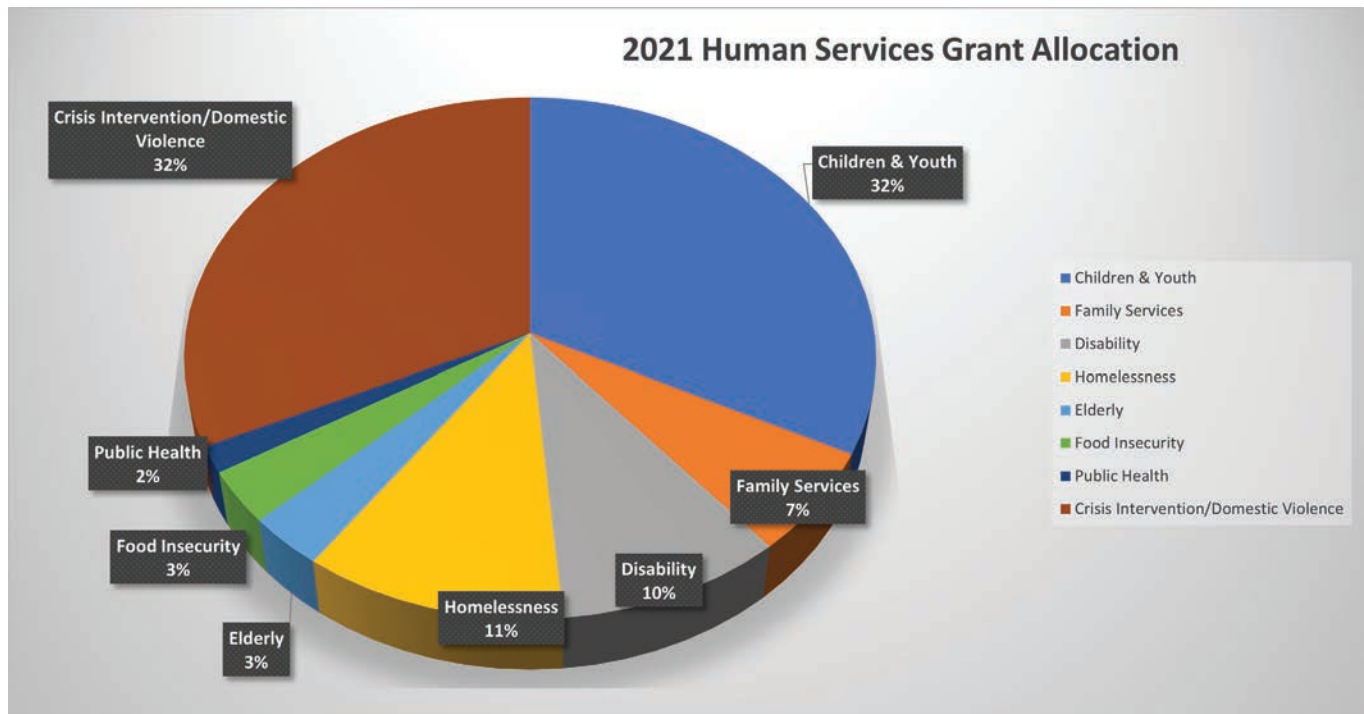
Our work is about seeing people; about acknowledging real-life experiences and struggles; and about lifting the people who have overcome their struggles and celebrating the people who have helped them do it. The DeKalb Human Services Department is committed to Connecting Families to Services. At the onset of the pandemic, Human Services developed and launched a virtual Lunch & Learn Series which is designed to educate the community and further highlight the work of our non-profit partners.

I am thankful for the DeKalb Board of Commissioners, CEO Thurmond and our many community partners for your ongoing support of this program. In addition, I would like to extend a special thank you to the Grants Team and Ms. Lisa Thomas, Grants Coordinator for her 15 years of service to the Human Services Grants Program. Her leadership has been significant to this life-changing work.

This report provides a snapshot of the impact that the Human Services Grants Program has made within DeKalb in the words of our partners and the individuals served.

**Damon Scott, Director
DeKalb Human Services**

HUMAN SERVICES GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING



Crisis Intervention/Domestic Violence Funding is made possible through an annual appropriation from the DeKalb Victim Assistance Fund which was established in 1995 in accordance with O.C.G.A. 15-21-131

HUMAN SERVICES GRANT PROGRAM 2021-2022 ALLOCATION

CATEGORY	AMOUNT
Children & Youth	\$294,024
Family Services	\$58,502
Disability	\$88,474
Homelessness	\$102,196
Elderly	\$29,954
Food Insecurity	\$29,794
Public Health	\$14,861
Crisis Intervention/Domestic Violence	\$289,644
TOTAL	\$907,449

FOOD INSECURITY



The US Department of Agriculture defines food insecurity as a lack of consistent access to enough food to live an active healthy life. **It is estimated that 14% of DeKalb County residents do not have reliable access to enough affordable nutritious food.** Food insecurity increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and today more families with children do not have access to food. In 2021, **42,000 pounds of food** were distributed to DeKalb food banks because of Human Services Grants.



In a recent workshop at Global Growers, a Burmese grower explains to other growers how to plant garlic. The growers all got to go home with their own supplies for planting garlic!



Felicia has had a host of health problems since retiring from her job at Eastman Kodak including being on dialysis. It has made it difficult to make ends meet. She's had to make decisions between getting food or getting medications or paying bills. When money falls short, she's able to find help and community at St. Martin de Porres food pantry, located on the grounds of Holy Cross Catholic Church. "Everybody's really good to you. They smile; when it's your birthday, they give you a little birthday card and sing to you. That helps because you just don't know what people are going through. Everybody has a hard time from time to time."

Whenever things get difficult in Felicia's life, she knows that the Atlanta Community Food Bank, and its partner agency, St. Martin de Porres food pantry will be there. – Brad Stombock, Foundations Relations Manager, Atlanta Community Food Bank



HOMELESSNESS



In 2020, Georgia had an estimated **10,234 persons** experiencing homelessness on any given day, as reported by Continuums of Care to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The purpose of the Continuum of Care program is to promote community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and state and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families. The Human Services Grant program provides supplemental support to address homelessness to DeKalb non-profits within the DeKalb Continuum of Care network.



"When we entered Spring of 2020, we were faced with a pandemic that would only grow. It affected the world; we were to stay home. Mercy Housing, with the help of others, established an onsite food pantry. It made food available to all residents who wished to use it. It was supplied with loving care and having the opportunity to work with it is with loving care. Eating well as we can is vital to our physical and mental health. It does not matter if you have unlimited funds and/or very little funds, it is a pantry for residents. We do not need to fear or feel ashamed as some have voiced. We are all maintaining. Every can, every bag is given in love. Thank you!"



3-year-old CJ was having to sit with the Program Assistant or Site Director almost daily due to disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Our family advocate had a meeting with his mom, who unfortunately, was experiencing mental health concerns herself. We made a referral for her to receive personal mental health therapy and another referral to address CJ's behavioral concerns. They have both come a long way and at the end of the school day, CJ always asks his teacher how his behavior was, and he delights in his mother hearing the glowing report.



CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES



Low childhood literacy has negative long-term consequences, and three fourths of Georgia's 3rd Graders do not read proficiently. **Statistics show that students who are not able to read at grade level by 4th grade are 4 times more likely not to graduate high school.** Human Services grants provide support for early learning and education through afterschool programs and mentoring programs that help students to improve their reading, writing and math skills as well as their self-esteem. In 2021, more than **2,400 children** received services in these critical areas.



Former Little Brother Nafis was matched in a 1:1 mentoring relationship with his Big Brother Roger, an employee at Cox Enterprises, through our Beyond School Walls workplace mentoring program. At the end of his senior year of high school, Nafis was awarded a college scholarship from Cox Enterprises.

"Mr Roger has taught me so many things I honestly do not know where to begin. The greatest thing that I have learned from him is the type of man I would like to see myself become. He never really tried tell me what to do and not do, but instead he helped me build a strong moral compass to guide myself in my own life."

Today Nafis is a student at Kennesaw State University. Nafis and Roger continue to stay in contact.

D. has grown in her confidence to manage her diabetes on her own. She has learned more about the disease and about what is going on in her body – and that has given her the ability and confidence to talk to other non-T1D peers about it more comfortably. We are thankful she got to meet more people like herself!



Meal packs with our
school partners in DeKalb.



We are so grateful for the support and funds from the Human Services Grant of DeKalb! Thanks to these funds, we are able to support our community through several avenues including early learning, afterschool academy, teen program, and parent workshops. Specifically, we are able to have our early learning classes and 4-year olds like Adriel paint their name and practice the letters of their name. Adriel is going to be able to start kindergarten knowing how to write and spell out his name.





"In the future, I see myself finally being happy and coming to terms with myself. I want to discover myself as a person and find confidence...In the future, I want to use the leadership skills I will learn in the 21CLub to and become more extroverted. By using the skills, I envision myself furthering my career in real estate as well as owning a real estate firm."

– Daranaim Mahamad, 21st Century Leaders student at Clarkston HS



21ST CENTURY
LEADERS
Inspiring youth to lead.



The Human Services Grant helped provide nutritious meals for our students! This picture is from the first day of our summer session, eating outside, socially distanced.

 **REACH FOR
EXCELLENCE**
Commit to the Climb





Maternal Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program

For the last 11 years, the Human Services Department has received over **\$640,000 a year** from the State of Georgia to implement the Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting Program.

The DeKalb County MIECHV (Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting) Program connects families to parenting resources and a wide range of community services that improve child and family well-being. Families receive services through First Steps, Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Head Start- Home Based Option visiting programs. This model is an evidence-based approach that has been proven to be successful for families with intensive needs.

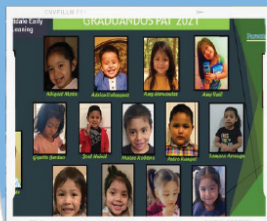
The MIECHV Program focuses on the prevention of child abuse and neglect as well as promotes positive parenting to enhance the achievement child developmental milestones and prepare young children to be successful in school. While in person home visits have been put on hold due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the DeKalb MIECHV program successfully provided services by holding virtual home visits using a webex platform and phone calls. In 2021, the DeKalb MIECHV served 159 families through virtual home visits and 1,000 families through the First Steps Program.

Testimonial for MIECHV- Scottdale Early Learning Inc.

For our North DeKalb families, with our MIECHV funds we were able to provide free car seat safety checks along with car seats to our families. Also, we provided transition educational packets to our 2021 graduating class.



Scottdale
Early Learning



CRISIS INTERVENTION/ DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT



Domestic violence (also known as family violence or intimate partner violence) is a widespread problem in Georgia and across the country. According to the Georgia Commission on Family Violence, there are approximately 46 state certified domestic violence programs in Georgia.

DeKalb County Human Services has provided support for individuals experiencing domestic violence for more than 30 years through grants to state certified domestic violence non-profits. These agencies provide immediate assistance in the aftermath of violence which includes shelter services, legal advocacy and support, daycare and children services, supervised visitation, mental health counseling, and a variety of other wrap around services. In 2021, our grant allocations assisted 4,157 DeKalb survivors of domestic violence.



Antionette and Deja met at our safe house. They knew they had one thing in common, the abuse that brought them to WRC. That's a powerful thing to share.

Antoinette and Deja have other things in common as well. They are both young mothers. They are both new to Atlanta. And they both wanted to build safe, happy lives for themselves and their children.

They're still friends. Antionette and Deja have moved out of the safe house into stable homes of their own. Antoinette has a job that pays \$18 per hour. They both have cars. They help each other with childcare. Deja came by the safe house last week to drop off clothing her preschooler has outgrown. She was headed to meet Antoinette at the BeltLine for a walk and some lunch while the kids were at school. Her hair blew in the fall breeze and her smile was beautiful.

Our safe house is many things – an emergency destination, a triage, a place to plan – but mostly it is a launch. It's a seedbed for friends, finances, community, and stability. It's a place of growing and connecting. A muse for the future.



Rahel Tsada made it into a metro Atlanta domestic violence shelter when there was still space.

It was late 2019, and the mother of two was pregnant with her third and desperate to leave the children's father. He'd kept her from fleeing his abuse, she said, by hiding her green card, passport, other important documents and family photos. Tsada, a native of Ethiopia, needed the documents to work or to rent an apartment.

The Women's Resource Center in DeKalb County took Tsada and her children in. The resource center saved her. "I feel like I have somebody who cares about me," she said.

But if Tsada had tried to flee abuse now, she likely would have a much harder time finding space in a shelter around Atlanta or elsewhere in the state. COVID protocols have forced shelters to reduce capacity. Reports of domestic violence have also risen amid the pandemic, leaving many shelters weathering unprecedented need. And many people end up staying in shelters longer, officials say, because of the lack of affordable housing in metro Atlanta and elsewhere in the state. Even the shelters are paying more in rent, along with other expenses.

DISABILITY SERVICES



According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 1 in 4 adults in the United States have a disability. In Georgia, 12% of the population is a person living with a disability. The prevalence of youth with disabilities in the United States is 1 in 10 youth.

Disability Services and programs include: the provision of assistive technology and/or medical equipment, education and advocacy support, medical care, and behavioral health services. **In 2021, Human Services Grants served over 1,000 people living with disabilities in DeKalb County.**



frazer center

Erin Santini-Asimakos husband George and their daughter Sofia who is 3 years old, both have autism.

Sofia is thriving at the Frazer Center. George is thriving at his workplace, but neither of them even had a diagnosis of autism until last year. Since then Erin has become a staunch advocate for people with disabilities.

"Sofia is very, very smart and picks up on things quickly. She's made a LOT of progress since she's been at Frazer." Over the course of six months, Sofia's language skills developed from fewer than ten

words to complex sentences.

"That's huge," says Erin. "She can tell me how she feels, what she wants, what she thinks. She asks questions about everything around her in the world. She has such a thirst for knowledge. And she understands. She's empathetic. She is excited about life and people and the world around her and learning. She talks about school when she gets home."

In fact, Sofia is doing so well that "many people can't tell she has a speech delay let alone autism," says Erin. "I tell them, what you're seeing is a child thriving in an environment where they belong."



"I am so impressed with the amazing staff and how engaging and motivating they are with the group.

My daughter, Natashah Sbaity looks forward to your events all week long!!" – Lillah Bezara



Nine-year-old Oliva from DeKalb County has been a FODAC client since she was just 2 years old. Her diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy makes daily living activities a challenge. This past year she received a pediatric gait trainer to help her walk and bathing aids to be more independent in the bathroom. The retail value with these items is \$1,300. Oliva has received 15 items from FODAC over the years including a pediatric feeder seat, stander, toilet seat, manual wheelchairs and gait trainers. As she grows in weight and height, she's able to return to FODAC to trade out equipment for items that will accommodate her increase in size. FODAC's first pediatric specialist (hired in 2019) is able to customize equipment to meet the changing needs of our approximate 300 child clients each year.



Olivia's mom writes, "FODAC is a gem in the special needs community. We have gotten numerous pieces of equipment for our daughter over the years. The equipment helps her be more active and independent at home and school."





Lekotek
Making a Difference for
Children with Disabilities

**THE
QUOTES
SAY IT
ALL** ””

**THERE ARE ALWAYS
LOTS OF SMILES AND
LAUGHTER DURING OUR
PLAY SESSIONS.** ””

**BEING AMONG OTHERS
ALWAYS GIVES ME MORE
STRENGTH TO DO WHATEVER
I NEED TO DO TO BRING
MORE SMILES TO MY
SONS FACE.** ””



**LEKOTEK HAS BEEN A RAY OF SUNSHINE
DURING ALL THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN
GOING ON. IT'S REALLY HELPED OUR ENTIRE
FAMILY A LOT. TIJAN'S SISTER LOVES
SIBSHOPS AND I ENJOY LEKOTEK'S
PARENT SUPPORT GROUP.** ””

**LEKOTEK PROVIDED HOPE FOR A BRIGHT
FUTURE, HELPING US SEE IMMY'S
ABILITIES. LEKOTEK MADE IT POSSIBLE
FOR IMMY AND HER SISTERS TO ENJOY
A CAMP EXPERIENCE TOGETHER —
SOMETHING WE HAD NEVER
THOUGHT POSSIBLE.** ””



FAMILY/HUMAN SERVICES



DeKalb is the fourth-most populated county in metro Atlanta, and it has one of the region's most diverse populations. Individuals relocate from all over the world to DeKalb and as such there is a large need for refugee services. Families in DeKalb have a variety of needs as they manage today's challenges. Funding from the Human Services Grant Program supports behavioral and mental health, general health and wellness, addiction recovery, emergency assistance for rent and utilities, and refugee services.

The session was held at the Center for Pan Asian Community Services to provide information on addiction recovery services and messaging and as an outreach to immigrant and refugee communities in Dekalb County. One of the attendees stated:

"I think that the listening session was helpful for the community because it was a great space to speak out and bring up different perspectives on how to deal with addiction."



Here is a quote from a man who is benefitting as a result of this grant:

"The class helped with communication and learning both sides of the story. I learned how to engage with women better. At first I would isolate myself because I thought that was the only way to deal with it. Then being in class helped me open up more. I learned about abusive behaviors that I never knew before. The Arc of Choice has helped learn the real problem. I can deal with people much better."

- P.H., a man who was referred by the DeKalb Public Defender's Office and is enrolled in MSV's 24 week Men At Work class as a result of this grant.





Donald

"I wanted to get my GED to help me better myself for the future."



Elizabeth, Families First Client

Elizabeth, a Families First counseling client shares, "All my needs are met since meeting Families First. My counselor has basically saved my life. She is like my guardian angel she's taught me some wonderful life skills that helped me throughout my days and in the coming years. There were a lot of different steps that I would have to take before meeting with someone one-one, but then I found Families First. I've been meeting with my counselor every week and it's been continued through virtual counseling. Virtual counseling. Counseling is a fueling up tool. You need gas for your car to run properly and everyone needs someone to talk to. Counseling is a strength. Self-care is the best care and take care of yourself with Families First."



Women who attended Wellness Group at RWN, created a gardening group where they rented a plot at the Jolly Garden in Clarkston. Wellness group was started during COVID shut down where women were experiencing isolation and concerned about mental health.



REFUGEE
WOMEN'S
NETWORK



Parents as Teachers.



Hema Acharya, her husband and two children live in Tucker. They also live with her mother in law and father in law. They are originally from Bhutan and have been in the United States for ten years. Hema came to New American Pathways through our Parents as Teachers program.

Soon after arriving in the US, Hema found out she was pregnant with her first child. She knew she needed to get a job to pay rent and other bills, but she was also concerned about having a healthy pregnancy.

She didn't know how to find a doctor or anything about the US Healthcare system. After her daughter was born, she felt very unsure how to parent in her new community and didn't have much support, since her family was so new to Georgia. One of her new friends soon told her about the Parents as Teachers program at New American Pathways and she was connected with Parent Educator

Hira Chhetri. Hema says about Hira: "When I remember my past and becoming a parent, I think of Hira. She taught me about car seats, safety, how to find diapers. She helped me enroll in WIC and other programs to help me."

Hema stayed in the Parents as Teachers program for several years while her daughter was a toddler. Her son is a toddler now, but the program helped Hema so much with her first child that she feels confident in her parenting now, and practices the PAT activities with her son on her own. Hema has the skills now and when she thinks about her past, she is so grateful that the PAT program and Hira were there to help her succeed as a new mom. I hope in the future every first time mom can get in this program, because it will change their life."

SENIOR SERVICES



Seniors in DeKalb have a variety of needs that are addressed by the Human Services Department. The Human Services Grant Program affords the Department the opportunity to extend the services provided through the Office of Aging. Grantees provide services and support to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, seniors in need of transportation services and to Caregivers.

	<p><i>The DeKalb County Human Services Grant enables I CARE to provide free transportation services to seniors of DeKalb County throughout the year. The seniors we serve are thankful for our services. Their words speak for us:</i></p>	
<p>"We really appreciate your help with rides for my parents to their doctor appointments. It has given us peace-of-mind knowing they are in safe and caring hands. The companionship has been great for them too. This is a great organization and am glad we found you in our time of need." ~Gustin</p>	<p>"I started driving for I CARE in 1999. I wanted to 'give back' in some way that required a minimal amount of time and effort since I was still working P/T. It's an ideal volunteer opportunity---stress-free with a lot of flexibility, but the best part is making a connection with those who really need this service!" ~Ginny</p>	<p>"I want to say that I think the men and women that drive for I CARE to their doctor appointments are some of the most wonderful, respectful and most caring of people you ever want to meet and you always feel safe when you are riding with them." ~ Virginia</p> <p>"Just a note to say thanks to you and the drivers. I can't find the words to say thank you for your kindness. The drivers are very caring and careful. They make you feel safe when riding." ~Gloria</p>
<p>"As an I CARE volunteer driver and member of I CARE's board, there are few experiences more rewarding than helping someone get the care they need. It all comes down to serving our community." ~Glenn</p> 	 <p>"I was in a bad spot. I needed to get to a large number of therapy appointments over a period of months. I was struggling and that's when I CARE stepped in. They were able to drive me to almost every single appointment and return me safely home. I can't thank them enough."</p> <p>~Tom</p>	 <p>"Thanks to I CARE for all your help and efforts with transporting us seniors. Hope you will be there to help us seniors for a long time".~Elsie</p> <p>"I wish to express my profound thanks for the medical transportation services you provide. Without your prompt and courteous service, I would have been unable to make many of these appointments. You provide an essential service with volunteers who are unfailingly friendly, polite and competent. I hope you continue to make this valuable opportunity available to our senior community. " ~Betty</p>



Caregivers Support Group has been a true lifeline for me. As one of 7 children plus an adopted son, I am the only one that cares for my mother, as the others have various excuses that allow them to be absent. I have received valuable emotional, financial, mental, and even physical support in the form of respite care. There have been resources and research that we have participated in and received benefit. I feel loved and supported, as well as a member of an extended family that includes the social workers, volunteers and those who give donations to encourage and support. Praise God for His Blessings!

Annette Mims, Ed.D.
Caregiver for Burnetta Rankins



Ms. Aline is a loving, 71-year-old grandmother who has been raising her 7-year-old grandson, Jaden, since he was an infant. His multiple disabilities requires 24/7 care, which Ms. Aline provides on a fixed-income of less than \$30,000 a year. Ms. Aline, herself, is not in the best of health, but she never complains and doesn't let anything stop her from ensuring her grandson is happy and healthy.

Her advice to others is, "Don't listen to people who say you're too old to

keep your grandchild. My grandson keeps me young because I'm always busy."

Ms. Aline is alone, without any other family to help her and she cannot drive, so isolation was a worry. ISDD provided her with a Chromebook so that she could participate in our virtual support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren with disabilities. Her case manager showed her how to use the device and including how to send emails and access school and healthcare portals. Ms. Aline says the Chromebook has opened up a whole new world for her! She regularly participates in the support group and enjoys the connections she is making with other grandparent caregivers.

ISDD has also been assisting Ms. Aline with obtaining enough food for her and her grandson. Although she is eligible for SNAP benefits, she

receives them only for herself. Her grandson's mother has claimed her son as a dependent, even though she provides no care or support for him.

Ms. Aline's ISDD case manager is assisting her to obtain the SNAP benefits she is due and ISDD has provided the family with groceries so they have enough to eat in the meantime. Her case manager has also assisted Ms. Aline with issues related to her grandson's IEP (Individual Education Plan) and his medical care as well as helping Ms. Aline to address her own personal health needs. Said Ms. Aline, "You all have given us so much and we are so grateful!"

Thanks to the support of DeKalb County and other donors, ISDD has been able to help Ms. Aline provide a safe and stable environment for Jaden so that he may become his best self.

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