



# Signal Mountain Social Services Annual Report 2021

TO OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS, DONORS, AND FRIENDS,

SMSS had a productive year, full of new programming and partnerships to support our neighbors in need. I have served as executive director for almost two years and feel fortunate to be grounded by this good work. I am not only inspired by our incredible staff, volunteers, and community but also by our resilient clients. We all depend on help from others, and we are strongest as a community when we come together to take care of each other! We rely on over 100 volunteers and our generous donors to keep this small but mighty agency going.

In this report, you will find new programs that address needs identified through community engagement, such as our Summer Scholars program and our new learning center. We have come a long way from the church basement, where special community members came together to create SMSS in 1954. I hope they feel proud of where we are today. Thank you for your continued support and helping to make Signal Mountain a better place to live, for everyone.

With gratitude,  
Elizabeth Neal



Signal Mountain Social Services Staff



The Clothes House Staff

## Our Mission:

We are a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to meeting the unique needs of families and individuals living within the 37377 zip code during times of financial challenge and crisis. Our longer-term focus is to provide clients the services and guidance they need to become self-reliant.

**TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS SERVED = 135**



# >> 2021 Programs, Services, and Client Impact

## Emergency Services:

**196 clients** received services in the form of assistance with food, rent, utilities, childcare, medical, dental, and vision care. Our food pantry distributed 5 bags of food and hygiene products as well as a voucher for dairy and eggs at Pruetts to **64 households**, totaling **148 visits**.



Signal Mountain staff members, Mary Katharine and LeaAnn picking up food donations.

## Client impact:

We assisted Jennifer with an emergency dental surgery she desperately needed. She had been in pain for several months and could not afford the major surgery needed to remedy the issue, with no dental benefits or savings. By the time she came to us, she was having trouble eating and showing up for work because of the pain she was experiencing. She had the surgery, is back to work, and is now hoping to start an emergency savings account for herself.



Volunteers Kim and Mary Ellen at our food pantry.

## Life Skills Counseling:

**66 clients** received life skills counseling with our social workers. We act as a bridge to a stable future for clients who may have lost jobs, have no stable support system, or struggle with transportation issues. We conduct home visits to assess our clients' needs and educate them on using their resources wisely, budgeting, job searches, digital literacy, resource allocation, goal setting, accountability, and parenting skills.



Town of Signal Mountain Fire and Police Food Drive.



Victoria, our Clothes House manager, sorting through donations.



Volunteer doing a home repair project.

## Client impact:

Charles was having trouble accessing his Social Security account and benefits. Frustrated with trying to navigate the automated and online services, Charles came to us for help. He said he felt "so left behind with all of the technology these days". We were able to work with Charles and eventually access his benefit information online. This led to giving him a donated laptop, accessing affordable internet service, and teaching him basic computer skills. He is excited about having access to the digital world and eager to learn more!





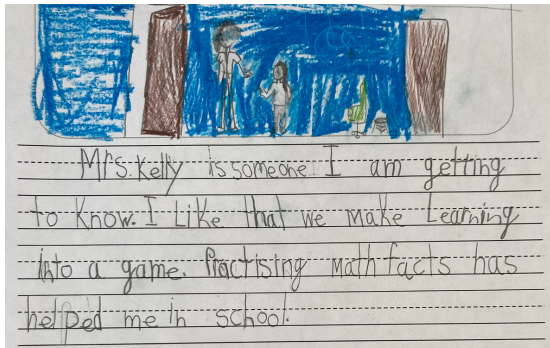
# >> 2021 Programs, Services, and Client Impact

## Educational Programs:

**173 clients received educational services.** These life-changing opportunities were provided to all ages, from preschoolers to adults, in the form of school supplies, scholarships, tutoring, summer camps, and extracurricular activities. SMSS is proud that high school graduation rates for our clients have grown exponentially since our tutoring program began in 2008. We are also excited to be reaching almost three times as many elementary students since our learning center opened.

## Senior Support:

**27 senior families** received regular home visits and supportive case management from our senior social worker. They often live on a fixed income so it's important they are aware of their spending habits. We also help them navigate important services that are critical to their well being. We connect our seniors with volunteers for home visits and warm meal deliveries. Often feeling isolated and alone, they appreciate these social connections and clearly benefit from having these interactions and relationships.



SMSS College Scholarship recipient and graduate, Ji'Anne



Summer Scholars



Volunteers preparing warm meals to be delivered to clients.

## Client impact:

Our SMMHS tutors identified two high school senior clients, potentially first generation college graduates, and helped them apply for college and the SMSS scholarship. Our tutors knew these children since they were middle schoolers, and believed they were both capable of a college career and deserving of our scholarship. They worked closely with them to make sure their applications were on time and complete. Both clients were accepted to colleges of their choice and awarded our scholarship to help cover tuition.



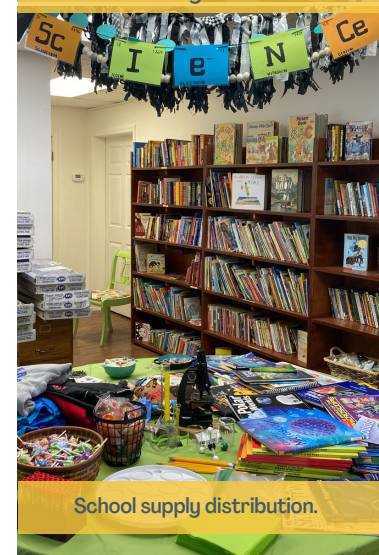
SMMHS Tutors, Johnna and Susannah.



SMSS tutor, Lea, at the learning center.

## Client impact:

Ruth lives alone and came to SMSS in need of help with her water bill. She hadn't been able to pay the bill in months so her past due balance had increased until she was overwhelmed with what she owed. She was also dealing with serious medical issues at the time, having been hospitalized for a brief period. After many hours on the phone and combing through bank statements, our senior Social Worker detected fraudulent activity and automatic drafts that Ruth wasn't aware of. SMSS was able to help her get this resolved, therefore allowing her to focus on her recovery. She closely watches her bank account now and is able to cover her monthly bills.



School supply distribution.



# >> 2021 Programs, Services, and Client Impact

## Home Repairs:

**16 households** received critical home repairs. Homes provide stability but our clients often can't afford the expensive repairs needed to stay safe in their homes. SMSS works with professional contractors to assess each repair for a clear cost benefit. Some of the repairs in 2021 included roof replacements, structural damage repairs, and wheelchair ramps.



### Client impact:

SMSS was able to provide solutions to major repair obstacles for these clients, allowing them to remain in their homes free of displacement worry.



The Mountain Ministries group doing home repairs for our clients.

## Christmas Baskets and Sponsor Program:

**52 households** received a Christmas basket in 2021, delivered by volunteers in our community. This joyful event brings us all together for a good cause. Our baskets include items such as food, warm clothing, blankets, and gifts. We also matched several families who live in the 37377 Sequatchie County zip code with sponsors for Christmas. This program provides extra support for our families during a time when budgets are stretched.



Staff and Volunteers at Christmas Baskets 2021.



Christmas Basket captain, Kim, and her boys.

### Client impact:

Ashley, a single mom of three young children, works a minimum wage job. She dreams of getting her GED when her children are older, but for now she is focused on being a good mom, paying her bills, and keeping food on the table. SMSS was able to match her with a gracious sponsor this year who supplied her with food, diapers, books, and toys for the children. She cried when she discovered there were gifts for her too, saying "I can't remember the last time someone gave me a gift".



SMSS Social Workers, Sarah and Mary Katharine



# Financial Profile



## 2021 OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

<b>Direct Services Expense:</b>	<b>\$155,264</b>
<b>Clothes House expense:</b>	<b>\$92,144</b>
<b>Office &amp; Administrative expense:</b>	<b>\$35,484</b>



## 2021 FUNDING SOURCES

<b>62% - The Clothes House</b>
<b>33% - Individual Donations</b>
<b>3% - Community and School Donations</b>
<b>2% - Church Donations</b>



## COST OF DIRECT SERVICES

Type of assistance:	Numbers served:	Cost:
<b>Educational Programs</b>	<b>63 students, 181 services</b>	<b>\$84,832</b>
<b>Emergency Assistance</b>	<b>112 households</b>	<b>\$47,184</b>
<b>Life Skills Counseling</b>	<b>66 households</b>	<b>\$16,629</b>
<b>Christmas Assistance</b>	<b>52 households</b>	<b>\$6619</b>



# Meeting Strategic Goals in 2021

Our staff members strive to follow our mission for those who demonstrate a financial need. This is done with the guidance of the Board of Directors, consisting of 10 dedicated individuals overseeing the direction of our agency. Our Council of Representatives includes 22 members who act as liaisons to their various community organizations. These volunteers are an invaluable link to the community, and also allow us to maximize the use of our funds.

The expansion of The Clothes House, the SMSS thrift shop, has proven to be a good investment and continues to be our primary source of income. Our 5 Retail Associates work hard each week sorting through donations to ensure only the highest quality of items are available to our shoppers. The Clothes House serves many purposes; it provides access to a low cost shopping alternative and encourages goodwill through shopping and donating there. It also provides emergency clothing and household items in times of crisis for our clients.

SMSS believes the key to self-sufficiency is education. We aimed to bridge the urgent academic gaps that were evident during the pandemic through our educational programs. We expanded the existing programs by opening an on-site learning center in 2021 for elementary students. We have three tutors offering undivided, 1:1 attention in a quiet, relaxed space. Our 2 week Summer Scholars day camp was also developed for K-8th graders. Our instructors made summer learning fun, while also focusing on social and emotional health. It was an additional service to our working parents in need of childcare, too!

We closed 27 files in 2021, meaning these clients no longer needed our services. Many of these clients reached the goal of self-sufficiency. It's very rewarding to close out the year with our clients feeling empowered and back on track.

## Looking Ahead:

We look forward to providing additional strategic services in 2022 aimed at client stability as we continue developing strong relationships with our community partners.

The issues facing families in need are complex and our 2022 client outreach will be fully encompassing. We truly can't do this work without our generous volunteers and donors and appreciate your continued support in 2022. Together, we can do great things and change lives.

