



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends,

SMSS is built on a strong foundation of dedicated staff members and volunteers, great partnerships, generous donors, and our loyal Clothes House shoppers. With the tremendous support of our community, SMSS served 164 households in 2023.

We are fortunate to have the ability to address critical needs such as food, bill assistance, home repairs, and clothing, but we know these services are sometimes only temporary solutions. Education helps people to emerge from hardship. Our tutoring and scholarship programs provide children and young adults with opportunities for growth. Our social workers strive to empower our clients through life skills counseling, no matter what challenges they face. We give them the tools they need, not only for a stable future, but a brighter one.

Another component of stability is recognizing how mental health issues, wellness, and self care impact our lives. SMSS hosted the “Community Conversations” speaker series to help raise awareness, provide resources, and reduce the stigma that can be associated with mental health. In addition to the series, a grant was launched and is now available to anyone in our service area who is experiencing a barrier to accessing mental health services.

I am inspired by labors of love and service every day through my work. This report is a direct reflection of our agency, but also our community and the core values we hold. Thank you for believing in the important work we do to support our Signal Mountain friends and neighbors!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Neal".

Elizabeth Neal
Executive Director



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.

2023 COMMUNITY IMPACT

LIFE SKILLS
COUNSELING:

87

CLIENTS

Emergency assistance:

55 households received assistance with rent, utilities, childcare, medical care, emergency home repairs, and vehicle assistance

FOOD PANTRY:
109 HOUSEHOLDS,
TOTALING **296** VISITS

Senior support:
23 households

MENTAL HEALTH
GRANT:

4

CLIENTS

Educational programs / number of students served:

Tutoring (K-12): 50

Extra curricular activities and summer camps: 27

Scholarships (preschool and post secondary): 9

School supplies: 80

Summer Scholars: 6

Good student club: 39

HOLIDAY ASSISTANCE:

62

HOUSEHOLDS

Home repairs:
16 households

2023 PROGRAMS

EDUCATION



The educational programs continue to provide life changing opportunities for preschoolers through adults. The elementary tutors provide 1:1 sessions at the SMSS Learning Center and in the schools. Our middle / high school tutors work in school with students where they have access to help everyday. The tutors focus on earning a high school diploma but also form mentoring relationships as they work with them year after year. As a result, graduation rates for our clients' children have improved immensely. SMSS can also help high school seniors with post-secondary planning and application processes.

Our back to school supply program provides supplies, a backpack, and a Walmart voucher for children's shoes and clothing. The Good Student Club motivates our elementary aged children throughout the school year to do their best in school. This club connects our social workers with teachers and parents in order to support children's needs and monitor progress. GSC students are rewarded with a party at the end of the year and scholarships to summer camps, athletics, and extracurricular activities. These activities improve self-esteem, enhance teamwork, and foster self-confidence. SMSS also loves helping families celebrate their children's birthdays through the birthday buddy program with help from local partners. Our summer scholars day camp engaged 3rd-8th grade students in fun, educational activities, and provided free childcare to working parents for two weeks over the summer break.



SCHOLARSHIPS

Preschoolers are assisted with scholarships to prepare them for successful entry into Kindergarten. Post secondary scholarships are awarded to students enrolled in technical through university level institutes. The scholarships are renewable, based on need. Many of these young adults are first generation higher education students, creating a new path for their families for years to come.

MENTAL HEALTH

SMSS leaned into the mental health space in 2023 with a monthly speaker series. We were honored to host professionals from various community and school settings from all over Chattanooga. They generously volunteered their time to share their knowledge and expertise with audience members online and in person. We learned more about navigating the mental health system, specific techniques and therapies being used to improve mental health, and the resources that are available in our public schools. Our mental health grant was also launched and is now available to anyone in the Signal Mountain community experiencing a financial barrier to accessing these types of services.



2023 PROGRAMS

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

The financial assistance program continues to be a critical component of SMSS and can cover the cost of basic needs such as food, shelter, and utilities. Assistance is based on the client's demonstrated need. Home visits, conducted by 1 of our 3 social workers, are customary for clients seeking financial assistance. These visits allow us to get a clear assessment and further develop a relationship with the client. We are then better equipped to address the emergency and strategize with clients on long term goals.



HOLIDAY ASSISTANCE

Over 150 members from our community gathered at Nolan Elementary over the holidays to pack and deliver Christmas baskets to clients, full of donated food and gift items. SMSS also matches sponsors with special families who do not receive baskets. This is a time of year when our clients' budgets can be particularly stretched, so the assistance they receive from SMSS is a tremendous gift to these families.

LIFE SKILLS COUNSELING

Financial independence is a major goal for our clients. There are often underlying issues, barriers, or constraints that make it difficult to reach this goal without help. Life skills counseling is used with clients who may have lost jobs, lack a healthy support system, are experiencing a medical crisis, have transportation barriers, or struggle with parenting issues. It starts with a good rapport, then building trusting relationships with our clients. When they are ready, we can work on resource referrals, setting goals, healthy habits, accountability, budgeting, employment coaching, and technology education. Life skills are not learned over night, so our 3 social workers are prepared to walk alongside clients as long as needed.

SENIOR ASSISTANCE

Our senior clients continue to be a high priority at SMSS. They often live on a fixed income so budgeting assistance and resource referrals provided by a dedicated senior social worker is crucial to their well being. We also connect them to special volunteers who provide warm meals and visits.



THE CLOTHES HOUSE

The Clothes House is our thrift store which is staffed by 5 employees and 25 volunteers, working hard to support the SMSS mission as our primary funding source and providing vouchers to clients in need of clothing and household items. It also offers an affordable shopping alternative to our community and cuts down on waste by keeping gently used items in circulation. SMSS receives high quality, desirable donations that attract people from near and far to come and shop.



2023 PROGRAMS

HOME REPAIRS

The home improvement and repair program increases quality of life and can avoid homelessness in some cases. It can address safety concerns in clients' homes that may otherwise be delayed because of financial constraints. Purchasing large appliances and furniture can be difficult, so we match them with gently used, donated items. Partnerships with professional crews who volunteer their time and skills are an integral part of this program.



IMPACT STORY

We met with three single mothers, all leaving unhealthy relationships and suddenly facing the challenges of a single income. We are proud they asked for help to persevere and had a place to turn during this difficult time. SMSS provided financial help for services such as school age day care, vehicle repairs, and rent payments which proved to be vital for these families. Alleviating these financial stressors allowed them to focus on parenting, work, and personal goals.



IMPACT STORY

Home repairs in 2023 included installing a wheelchair ramp for a senior amputee, replacing a leaky roof for a family of five, and pest control services to rid a home of infestation.

FOOD PANTRY

The SMSS food pantry continues to run smoothly with the pantry manager overseeing 32 volunteers. We have a volunteer each day of the week, packing and distributing groceries and hygiene items for clients. In 2023, 1776 bags of food were distributed, feeding 544 adults and 323 children. They also receive a Pruett's voucher providing dairy items and eggs.

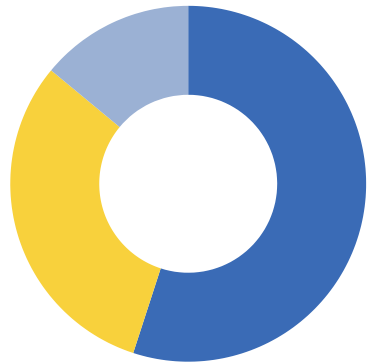
IMPACT STORY

Often, a client's income can exceed the limit to qualify for SNAP benefits although they still struggle to feed their families. SMSS bridges gaps in the system such as these. Our food pantry clients also have access to a social worker if there are further needs in their household.



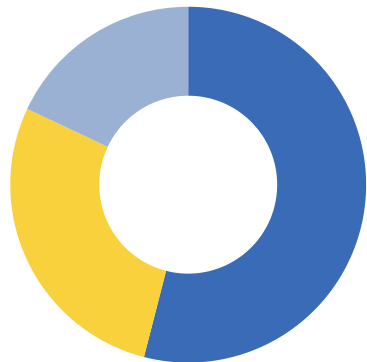
2023 FINANCIAL PROFILE

*Fiscal year ended December 31, 2023
*In Kind donations not included



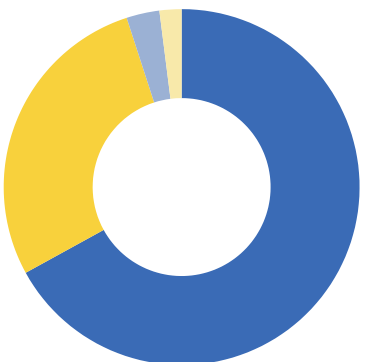
Operational Expenses

Direct Services: 55%
Clothes House: 31%
Office & Administrative: 14%



Direct Services

Educational: 54%
Emergency: 28%
Life Skills: 18%



Funding sources

The Clothes House: 67%
Individual Donations: 28%
Community Organization Donations: 3%
Church Donations: 2%

Total agency expenses were covered by generated income. Our thrift store, the Clothes House, continues to be the primary source of income. SMSS also relies heavily on churches, civic groups, community businesses, and individual donations to maintain financial solvency. All of our funding sources and volunteers are critical in our mission to maximize the investments we make in our Signal Mountain families.



THE CLOTHES HOUSE STAFF



SMSS STAFF

Thank You

As you have seen in this report, we truly could not do this work without our incredible donors, volunteers, and community partners! They assist in staffing the Clothes House and food pantry and provide direct support for clients such as home repairs, warm meal deliveries, senior visits, and assistance with special projects. The Board of Directors consists of 10 dedicated individuals offering their expertise to oversee the direction of the agency. 23 Council Members represent various community organizations and churches on the mountain and are an invaluable link to resources. We also partner with many civic organizations to meet the needs of our community.

Community Partners

The Town of Signal Mountain, The Mountain Arts Community Center (MACC), Nolan Elementary School, Thrasher Elementary School, Signal Mountain Middle High School, Signal Mountain Soccer League, Wayside Presbyterian Church, Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church, St. Augustine Church, St. Timothy's Church, Signal Crest Methodist Church, Mountain Fellowship Church, Signal Mountain United Methodist Church, Signal Mountain Bible Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, The Point Church, United Church of Christ, Mountain Fellowship Church, Mountain Ministries, The Lions Club, Signal Mountain Women's Guild, The Walden's Ridge Guild, Signal Santas, The Ladies Golf Association, Pruett's Market, the Bread Basket, Ace Hardware, Signal Mountain Nursery, Gigi's Sweet Shop, Community Baptist, Tech Rescue, Southern Star, Moms of Preschoolers, Knights of Columbus, Signal School of PE, Signal Mountain Fire and Police, Town of Walden, 35 South, Dialed In Chiropractic, Mountain Top Toys, Chatt Box Co, Signal Mountain Christian School, Eyes on the Mountain, and Welch Dental Center

RECIPIENTS OF SMSS 2023 LAMAR RANKIN SERVICE AWARD



Marcie Hansen



Carla Jones

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2024

SMSS will continue to meet the unique and complex needs of our community on Signal Mountain. We look forward to a productive 2024, providing critical strategic services aimed at caring for our clients' most urgent needs and beyond. Through outreach and engagement, we are always striving to better serve our clients and extend our reach if possible. We look forward to expanding our programs and services to our Lone Oak neighbors this upcoming year. Stay tuned to our social media for announcements and upcoming events!



Website
signalmountainsocialservices.org



Facebook
[Signal Mountain Social Services](#)
[The Clothes House](#)



Instagram
[@smsocialservices](#)