

*BASTROP COUNTY CARES*

# COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2025



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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**NORMA  
MERCADO, LMSW**  
*EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

None of this work would have been possible without the trust and partnership of our collaborators—school districts, local governments, health systems, nonprofits, funders, faith leaders, and residents who continue to show up with commitment and courage. Together, we demonstrated the power of collective impact: leveraging modest early investments into transformational outcomes, aligning resources across sectors, and centering community leadership in every decision. As Executive Director, I am grateful for the dedication of our staff, board, and partners, and I enter 2026 confident that the relationships we strengthened this year will continue to drive sustainable, equitable change for Bastrop County.

As I reflect on 2025, I am deeply proud of the collective progress Bastrop County Cares made in strengthening the conditions where our neighbors live, work, learn, and thrive. This year marked significant momentum across our core priorities—expanding access to health care and economic opportunity, advancing digital equity, strengthening food security, and elevating community voice. Through initiatives such as broadband mapping and digital literacy expansion, trauma-informed supports for children and families, and coordinated responses to rural needs, we moved from planning to measurable action, always grounded in lived experience and data-driven collaboration.

**5,000+**

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
REACHED**

**75+**

**COMMUNITY & AGENCY PARTNERS**

**1,200+**

**RESIDENTS CONNECTED TO  
RESOURCES**

# **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



**WILLY CULBERSON**  
**BOARD CHAIR**



**BECKY WOMBLE**  
**VICE CHAIR**



**PATRICIA ULCZYCKI**  
**BOARD TREASURER**



**JANICE SUMLAR EDMONDS**  
**BOARD SECRETARY**



**CHARLIE COLTER**  
**BOARD MEMBER**



**CHASE BROWNING**  
**BOARD MEMBER**



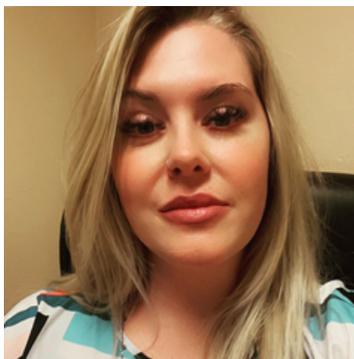
**DALLIA MANCHA**  
**BOARD MEMBER**



**DONNA SNOWDEN**  
**BOARD MEMBER**



**JUDGE PAUL PAPE**  
**BOARD MEMBER**



**TAYLOR HODGES**  
**BOARD MEMBER**



**ZENAIDA MARTINEZ**  
**BOARD MEMBER**



# ***AGENCY OVERVIEW***

## **VISION**

All individuals in Bastrop County can equitably share in the social fabric of our community, access great educational programs, be economically stable, and live healthy full lives.

## **MISSION**

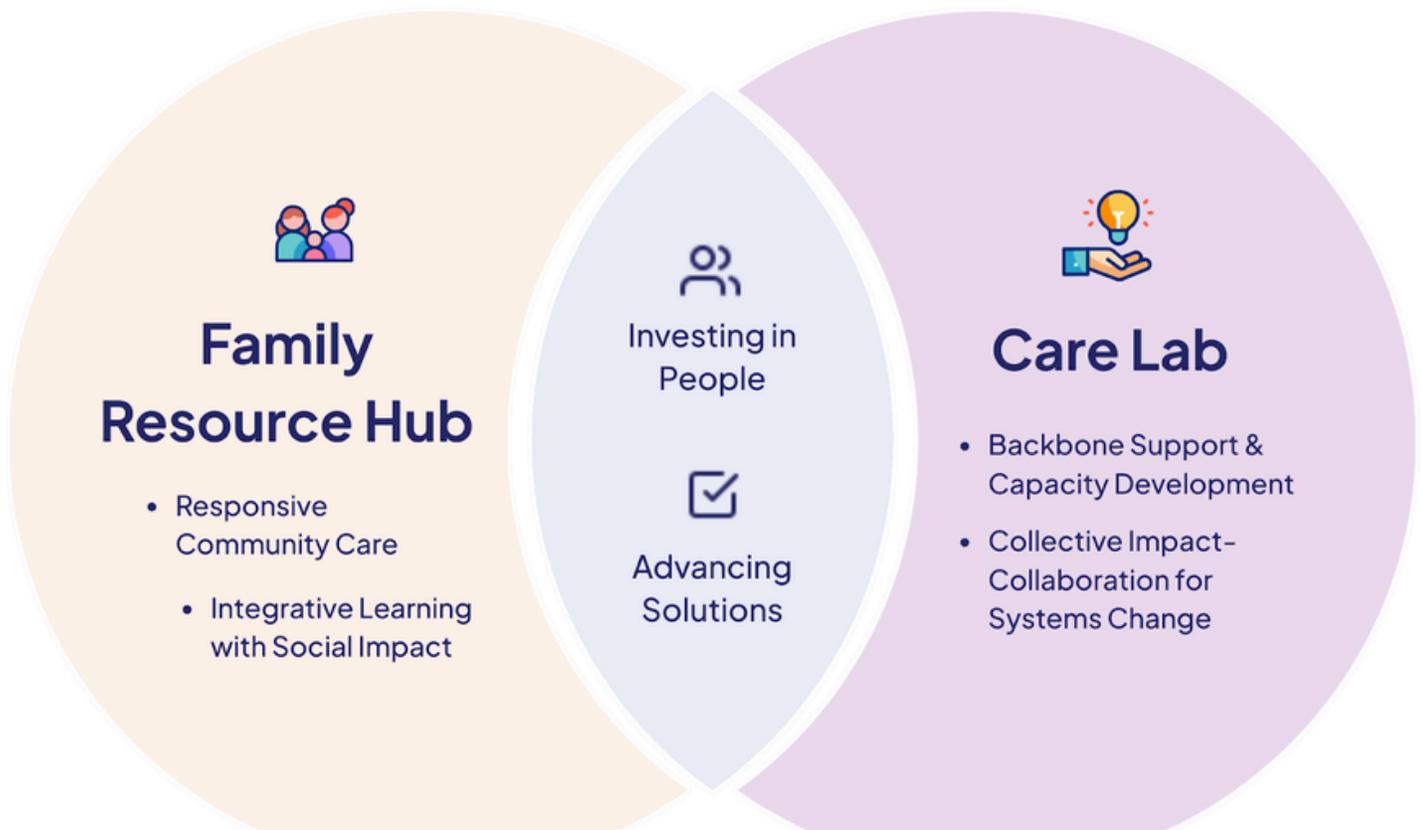
Bastrop County Cares brings people together to collaborate around large community challenges that no one organization can solve on its own to improve the conditions where our neighbors live, work, pray and play.



# ***IMPACT OVERVIEW***

Between July and November 2025, Bastrop County Cares distributed more than \$750,000 in Community Impact Grant funding, supporting 20 community-led projects selected from 250+ applications reviewed and scored by a 10-member volunteer community panel.

During this period, funded partners collectively served 2,778 Bastrop County residents, including 2,009 adults and 4,787 youth, through 620 events, 78 community gatherings, 55 workshops, 94 trainings, and 337 days of one-on-one support. Services reached residents across multiple ZIP codes county-wide, reflecting broad geographic coverage and inclusive access. Together, these investments empowered residents to design and lead solutions in their own neighborhoods, strengthening economic stability, education, health, and overall community well-being.

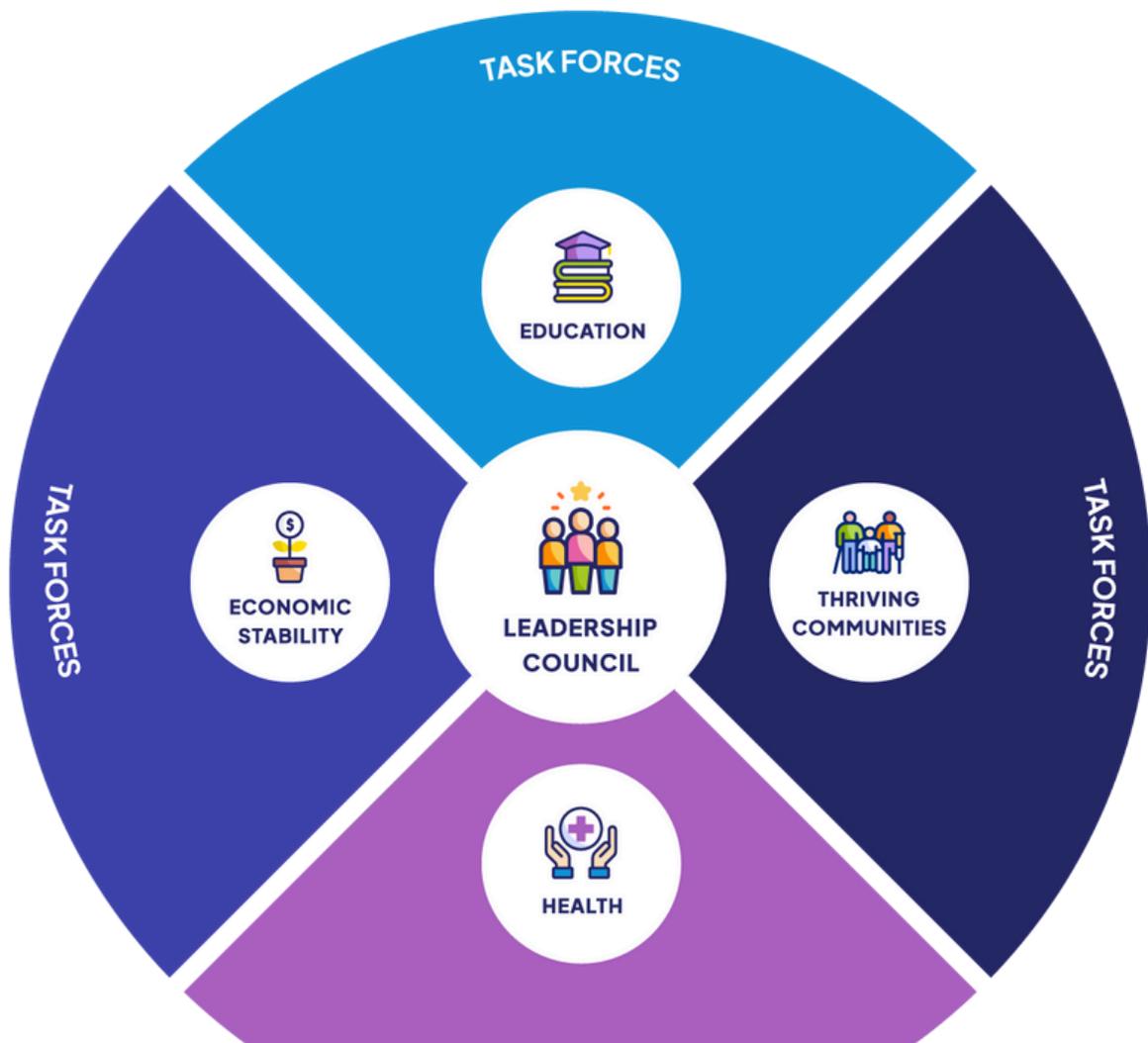


# ***RURAL CARE LAB***

Bastrop County Cares' transition from direct service to intermediary funder reflects a clear Theory of Change focused on long-term, community-driven outcomes. BCC began with direct practice through the Family Resource Hub, building trust with families and gaining firsthand insight into community needs. That experience now informs evidence-based strategies and funding decisions.

Through its backbone role, including initiatives like the Care Lab, BCC convenes partners, strengthens organizational capacity, and facilitates collaboration across sectors. This systems-level work produces tangible outcomes—data-informed policy conversations, aligned initiatives, and the integration of lived experience into decision-making.

As an intermediary funder, BCC invests in grassroots leaders and organizations to strengthen community infrastructure, expand equitable access to resources, and improve outcomes across health, education, and economic stability. The result is a healthier, more resilient community ecosystem where families thrive, nonprofits are better resourced, and funding and policy align with lived realities.



# COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Bastrop County Cares strengthened county-wide collaboration by implementing a Collective Impact-driven engagement model that aligns partners around shared goals and measurable action. This structure organizes community work across four key areas, Economic Stability, Education Access & Quality, Health Care Access & Quality, and Thriving Communities, ensuring efforts address the Social Determinants of Health in a coordinated way.

Through this model, community members, service providers, and decision-makers work together using a shared agenda, clear roles, and continuous communication. Task forces move ideas into action, while a Leadership Council helps align efforts, reduce duplication, and maximize impact across the county.

By centering lived experience, supporting data-informed decision-making, and providing backbone support, Bastrop County Cares helps turn collaboration into meaningful, community-led change.

# ***YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS***

<b>ANNUAL BUDGET</b>	<b>\$3.5M</b>
<b>FUNDERS</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>FULL TIME EMPLOYEES</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PART TIME EMPLOYEES</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CONTRACTED PARTNERS</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PROGRAM AREAS</b>	<b>5</b>

*Since 2023, Bastrop County Cares has significantly expanded organizational capacity, growing from 7 to 9 funders, increasing full-time staff from 13 to 22, and strengthening partnerships across five focused program areas. Annual operating capacity more than doubled, rising from \$1.4M in 2023 to \$3.5M in 2025, reflecting sustained investment in community impact.*



## ***BASTROP COUNTY LOCAL FOOD FAIR***

In partnership with Texas Center for Local Food, Bastrop County Cares supported initiatives that strengthened local food systems, increased economic opportunity for producers, and connected residents to locally grown food.

Together, the organizations co-hosted the 2nd Annual Bastrop County Local Food Fair, creating a space for community members to engage directly with local vendors and producers while supporting local economic activity and celebrating Bastrop County's growing local food ecosystem.

In addition, Texas Center for Local Food hosted the county's first buyer match-maker event, designed to connect local farmers with institutional and wholesale buyers, laying the groundwork for long-term purchasing relationships and sustainable market access.

### ***Local Food Systems Impact Highlights: Data provided by Texas Center for Local Food***

- \$1,565 in local food sales reported by participating vendors
- 37 vendors participated in the Bastrop County Local Food Fair
- 200 community members attended the event
- 14 farmers and buyers participated in the buyer match-maker event
- 100% of participants made potential buyer-producer connections
- \$800 in sales occurred immediately following the match-maker event





## **B-WELL**

In 2025, Bastrop County Cares led B-WELL, a bilingual community wellness initiative designed to reduce barriers to healthy living and support long-term physical, emotional, and social well-being. From January through October, the program offered free monthly in-person workshops and quarterly virtual sessions in both English and Spanish, reaching 58 community members with strong repeat participation.

Participants reported positive health and wellness outcomes, with 76% feeling physically healthy, 79% feeling emotionally and mentally well, and 72% regularly practicing healthy habits such as balanced nutrition, movement, and adequate sleep. Nearly 79% expressed confidence in maintaining a healthy lifestyle long-term, and 76% reported knowing how to access community health resources.

B-WELL reached residents across Bastrop, Elgin, and surrounding rural communities and engaged a racially and ethnically diverse group of participants. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with 88% rating session topics as “very useful.” Many participants left with clear intentions to improve nutrition, increase physical activity, and prioritize mindfulness and self-care, demonstrating B-WELL’s impact on both immediate engagement and lasting behavior change.

**88%**

Participants rated session topics as  
“very useful”

**79%**

felt confident maintaining a healthy  
lifestyle long-term



## ***BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE***

In partnership with St. David's Foundation, Bastrop County Cares led a community-driven initiative to address long-standing gaps in broadband access across Bastrop County. A \$40,000 planning grant supported resident surveys, local mapping, and volunteer leadership to identify underserved neighborhoods, many of which were not reflected in official broadband coverage data.

This grassroots, data-informed approach elevated community voices and built a compelling case for investment. The effort ultimately helped unlock the largest infrastructure investment in Bastrop County's history: a \$43.1 million state broadband grant, combined with an additional \$11 million investment from a rural internet provider.

As a result, more than 10,000 homes and businesses are expected to gain access to affordable, high-speed internet, expanding opportunities for education, telehealth, workforce participation, and small business growth. This initiative reflects Bastrop County Cares' commitment to equity, collaboration, and resident-led solutions that create lasting improvements in quality of life across the county..

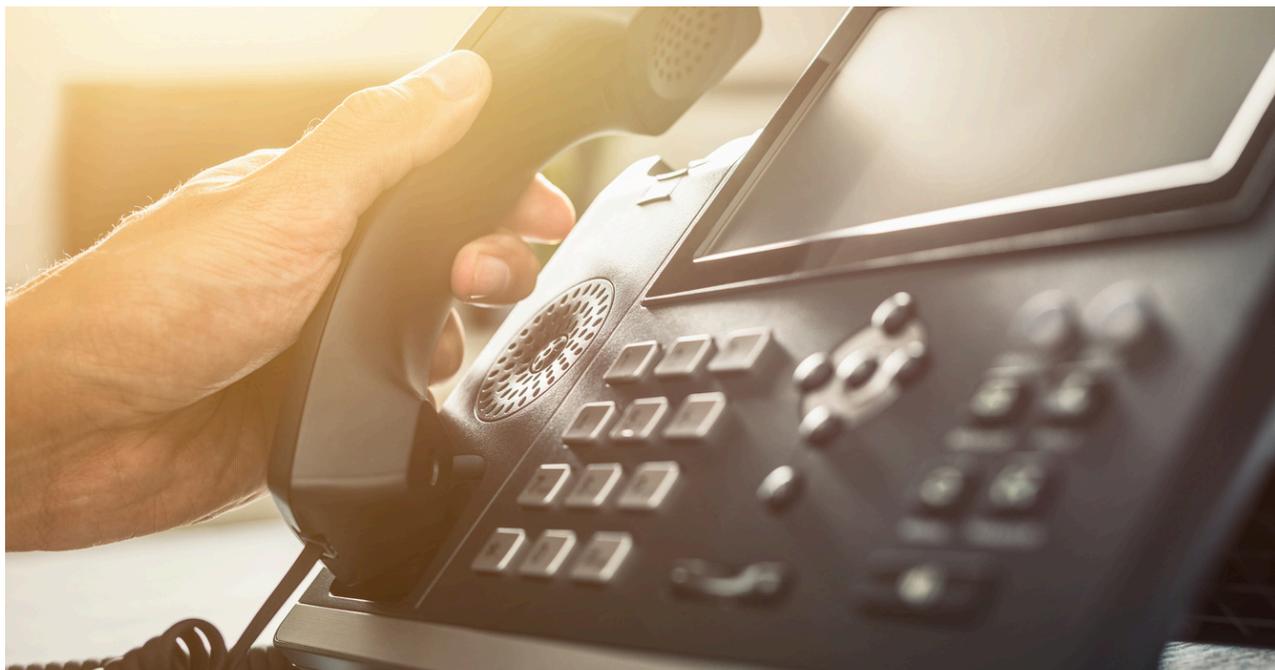
*Click here to read the full story.*

**\$43.1 M**

State broadband grant secured to expand internet access countywide.

**10,000+**

Homes and businesses expected to gain affordable broadband access.



## ***CALL CENTER***

Between January 2024 and October 2025, Bastrop County Cares' call center supported 500+ community members seeking assistance with a wide range of needs, including housing stability, financial support, healthcare access, and general resource navigation.

Each intake represents a real-time connection between residents and coordinated services, with staff providing follow-up, referrals, and ongoing support as needed. This centralized intake system strengthens access to help, reduces barriers to care, and ensures residents are not navigating complex systems alone, reinforcing BCC's role as a trusted entry point for community support.

**519 +**

Community intakes handled through  
the BCC call center

**10+**

ZIP codes represented, showing  
county-wide reach



## CARE-A-VAN

Between November 2024 and November 2025, Bastrop County Cares' Care-A-Van initiative reached more than 7,700 community members through pop-up events, festivals, school partnerships, and neighborhood gatherings across Bastrop County.

Care-A-Van events were hosted in parks, schools, churches, community centers, and festivals, bringing services directly to residents where they already gather.

Events included:

- Resource navigation and referrals
- Family-friendly activities and youth engagement
- Mental health and wellness outreach
- Community conversations and relationship-building
- Special events such as baby showers, school celebrations, and seasonal festivals

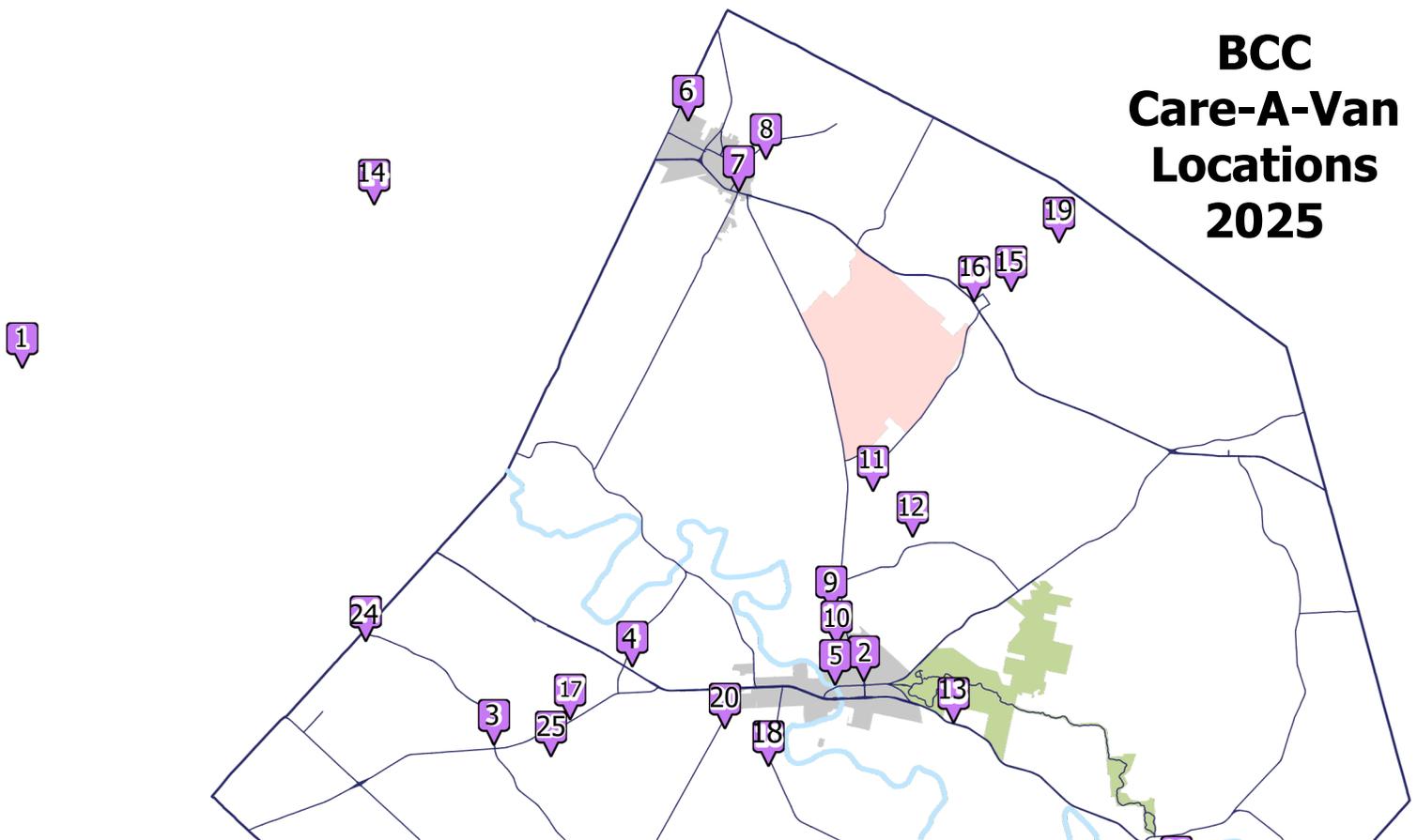
**1,169**

Residents reached in a single month  
(October 2025 — highest month)

**150+**

Attendees at multiple  
single-day events

# BCC Care-A-Van Locations 2025



- 1** - Austin Care A Van Show Off (1 event / 80 attendees)
- 2** - Bastrop Convention Center (2 events / 95 attendees)
- 3** - Cedar Creek Methodist Church (2 events / 81 attendees)
- 4** - Compass Rose (1 event / 20 attendees)
- 5** - Downtown Bastrop (1 event / 39 attendees)
- 6** - Elgin ACE (1 event / 77 attendees)
- 7** - Elgin Annual Cook Out ( 1 event / 235 attendees)
- 8** - Elgin Thomas Memorial Park (8 events / 458 attendees)
- 9** - Elgin VFW (1 event / 29 attendees)
- 10** - Head Start (1 event / 44 attendees)
- 11**- LBA Blessed Hope Ministries (2 events / 36 attendees)
- 12** - Lost Pine Elementary (1 event / 362 attendees)
- 13** - Lost Pines Toyota (1 event / 128 attendees)
- 14** - Manor ISD (2 events / 344 attendees)
- 15** - McDade Baptist Church (3 events / 19 attendees)
- 16** - McDade Festival Grounds (2 events / 50 attendees)
- 17** - Summer Finale Hopewell Rosenwald (1 event / 20 attendees)
- 18** - Pregnancy Resource Center (2 events / 8 attendees)
- 19** - Rising Sun Vineyard (1 event / 66 attendees)
- 20** - Shiloh Community Center (5 events / 150 attendees)
- 21** - Smithville MLK Park (6 events / 243 attendees)
- 22** - Smithville Rec Center (2 events / 445 attendees)
- 23** - Smithville Riverbend Park (1 event / 87 attendees)
- 24** - Stony Point Park (9 events / 289 attendees)
- 25** - Summer Kick Off (1 event / 111 attendees)

Location with  
Most Events

**Stony Point  
Park:  
9 Events**

Location with  
Most Total  
Attendees

**Elgin Thomas  
Memorial Park:  
458**

# COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING



SCAN FOR OUR  
WEBSITE

**TOTAL SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIENCE:**  
7,300+ FOLLOWERS

**EMAIL REACH:**  
1,750+ NEWSLETTER  
SUBSCRIBERS

**EMAIL CAMPAIGNS SENT:**  
12 NEWSLETTERS SENT IN 2025

**AVERAGE EMAIL OPEN RATE:**  
58.6%



SCAN TO MAKE A  
DONATION

**SOCIAL MEDIA VIEWS:**  
1.6 MILLION

**CONTENT INTERACTIONS:**  
19,900+

**AUDIENCE RETENTION:**  
23,000+

**PAGE VIEWS:**  
49,000+



@BASTROPCOUNTYCARES



## **COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER OUTREACH**

In 2025, Bastrop County Cares Community Health Workers conducted outreach and completed 363 Social Determinants of Health screeners with residents across Bastrop County. These screenings helped identify priority needs and connect individuals and families to critical resources and services.

Outreach reached residents across multiple age groups, with the largest proportion of participants between ages 20–39, reflecting strong engagement among working-age adults. Screenings were conducted countywide, with the highest concentration of participants residing in ZIP codes 78602, 78957, and 78621, highlighting areas of greatest service demand.

Top identified areas of need included:

- Education Access and Quality – 118 residents seeking support related to continuing education, early education, family resources, and fatherhood programs
- Health Care Access and Quality – 115 residents needing assistance with benefits enrollment, medical transportation, and pregnancy-related support
- Economic Stability – 85 residents requesting help with workforce development, job seeking, food access, and broadband connectivity

These findings underscore the ongoing need for wraparound, community-based support services and reinforce the importance of Community Health Workers as trusted connectors between residents and essential resources. Through targeted outreach and data-informed engagement, Bastrop County Cares continues to advance equitable access to education, health care, and economic opportunity across the county.

**318+**

Residents identified with priority needs

**363+**

Residents screened by  
Community Health Workers

# COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANT

In 2025, Bastrop County Cares awarded more than \$750,000 through its Community Impact Grant to support 20 community-led initiatives addressing education, health, workforce development, youth empowerment, housing stability, and food security across Bastrop County.

Between March 1 and April 15, BCC received over 250 applications from residents, grassroots groups, and local organizations. To promote accessibility and equity, proposals were accepted in multiple formats, including written, video, and in-person submissions. A 10-member Community Review Panel, composed entirely of Bastrop County residents, reviewed and scored each application, ensuring funding decisions reflected community priorities.

The selected grantees represent the diversity, creativity, and resilience of Bastrop County, from youth mentorship and workforce training to food access, housing support, and small business development. Through this investment, BCC continues to advance community-led solutions that foster equity, strengthen local infrastructure, and create lasting impact where it is needed most.

## 2025 COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANT RECIPIENTS

- Allure Alliance
- Bastrop County Cares Education Collaborative
- Bastrop County Rotary Foundation
- Bastrop Law Group
- Bee-lieve & Achieve
- Beyond Limits: Beyond Expectations
- Boys & Girls Clubs of South Central Texas
- Center for Economics, Enterprise, & Innovation
- Community of Hope
- Digital Uplift Bastrop
- Elevate Youth
- Empower Bastrop County
- Feed the Need
- First Presbyterian Church of Elgin
- Jay's Landscaping
- Lost Pines Parent Teacher Association
- New Direction Church Youth Outreach & Development
- R.A.R.E Academy
- The Black Fund
- The H.A.B.I.T.S. Group





# ***ECONOMIC STABILITY***

Over the past six years, BCACH has built a county-wide system focused on improving economic stability as a pathway to better health outcomes. Through collaboration with 22 partner organizations, Community Health Workers, and shared referral tools like ConnectATX, BCACH has strengthened access to workforce training, healthcare navigation, education, and essential resources across Bastrop County.

Data shows that more than 75% of client needs are tied to economic stability, reinforcing the importance of this approach. As a result, residents have accessed coordinated services, earned living wages, with workforce graduates earning an average starting wage of \$32 per hour, and experienced culturally responsive, trusted support, reflected in a 95% client satisfaction rate.

**12,600+**

Resource searches completed through  
ConnectATX in just 3 months  
(May–August 2025)

**107+**

Residents served through CHW-  
led events across 8 communities





# FOOD ACCESS

We are grateful to St. David's Foundation for trusting Bastrop County Cares as an intermediary organization helping address food insecurity across Bastrop County. Through this funding, BCC partnered with local school districts, community leaders, and faith-based organizations to reach families most impacted by the current food crisis.

Support included 9 rural food distribution sites, with over 500 food boxes distributed at each location, expanding access in hard-to-reach communities. In addition, BCC provided \$1,000 grants to 13 local food pantries and sponsored the Bastrop Emergency Food Bank NIBBLES program at Adelton Elementary School for 12 months, totaling \$8,000 in direct student support.



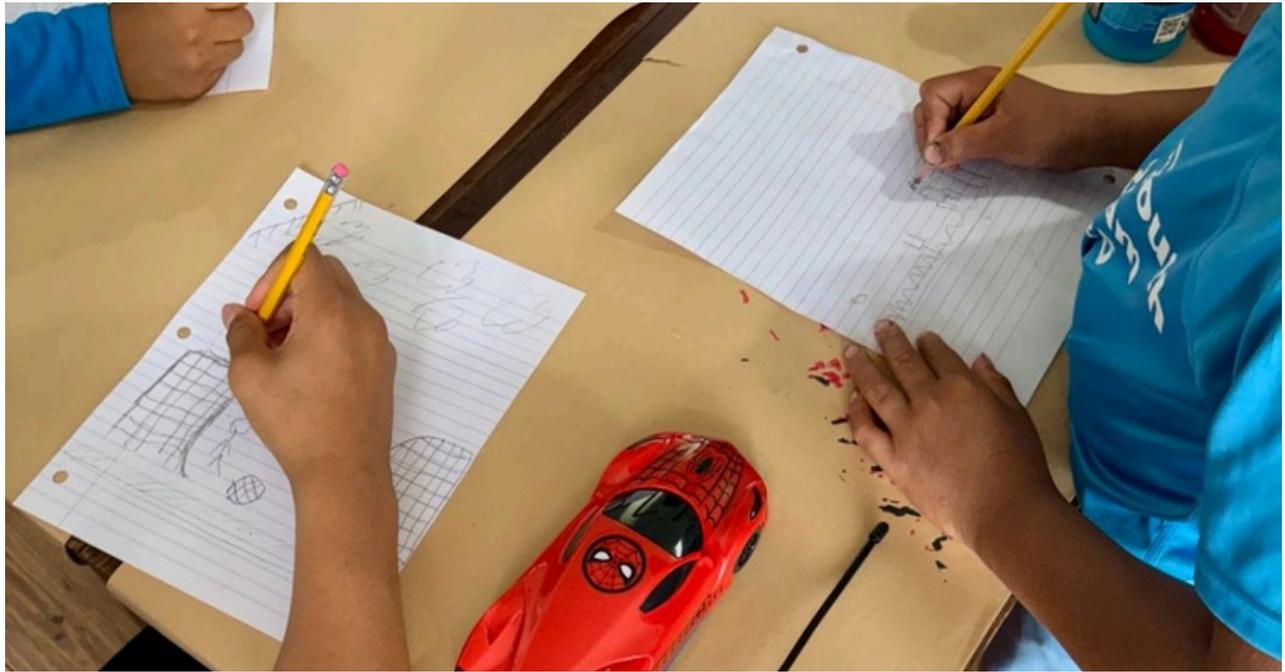


# FOOD ACCESS

During our rural food distribution efforts, carried out in collaboration with the Central Texas Food Bank, a total of 525, twenty pound, non-perishable food boxes were distributed to 496 households, including 477 walk-up participants and 19 pre-registered families, helping ensure reliable access to nutritious food for families facing food insecurity.

Among those served, 230 families included children under the age of five, representing 483 young children who benefited from this support. These efforts included nine rural distribution locations, with 100 food boxes provided at each site, expanding food access in hard-to-reach communities across the county.





## ***OUT OF SCHOOL TIME (OST)***

OST CARES (Out-of-School Time) is a youth-focused emotional wellness initiative led by Bastrop County Cares that supports children's social-emotional development outside of the school day. Through age-appropriate workshops, emotional check-ins, and creative activities, OST CARES helps children identify and express emotions, build resilience, and practice healthy coping skills in safe, supportive environments. Programming is delivered at community events, schools, Care-A-Van stops, literacy events, and youth retreats, with a focus on reaching rural and underserved areas of Bastrop County OST.

During the summer of 2025, OST CARES served 958 children, with youth completing feedback surveys, across Del Valle, Bastrop, Cedar Creek, and Elgin. The majority of participants were ages 5–8, who reported enjoying conversations about feelings and expressed interest in continuing to practice emotional skills. Among youth ages 9–12, 70% reported feeling safe and comfortable during workshops, and 76.7% felt that staff were attentive and present, demonstrating the program's success in creating trusted spaces for emotional learning

**76.7%**

Felt staff were attentive and present

**70%**

Of youth ages 9–12 felt safe and comfortable during workshops



# ***TRANSPORTATION ACCESS***

Transportation access remains a critical driver of health and economic stability across Bastrop County. Through the CARTS Transportation Pass program, Bastrop County Cares distributed 300+ transportation passes, supporting 200+ individual transportation encounters for residents needing access to medical appointments, employment, food assistance, and essential services.

Support reached residents across multiple ZIP codes and communities county-wide, serving individuals ranging in age from children to adults over 90 years old. Medical care was the most common reason for transportation support, underscoring the role transportation plays in accessing timely healthcare. By reducing transportation barriers, this initiative helped residents attend appointments, maintain employment, and stay connected to critical resources they might otherwise be unable to reach.

**300+**

CARTS transportation passes distributed to Bastrop County residents

**0-99**

Ages 0-99 served, with a strong reach among older adults and individuals managing chronic health needs



# VETERANS BOWLING NIGHT

Veterans Bowling Night is a recurring, community-centered social gathering hosted by Bastrop County Cares to create a welcoming, low-pressure space where veterans and their families can connect, relax, and build relationships. Held monthly at Film Alley in Bastrop, the event is open to veterans of all ages and backgrounds and welcomes participants of every bowling skill level. Veterans Bowling Night is intentionally designed to remove barriers to participation by offering a casual, judgment-free environment focused on fun, conversation, and shared experience.

Survey feedback from participants showed that while many veterans already engage in wellness-supporting activities, a significant number feel only moderately connected to other veterans or their community. 45% reported feeling somewhat connected, reinforcing the importance of intentional social spaces like Veterans Bowling Night. Despite broader challenges, most notably lack of access to resources, cited by 45% of respondents, the event was well received. 55% rated the event as “very helpful,” and 73% reported being very likely to participate in future veteran activities, demonstrating strong value and continued engagement. Veterans Bowling Night was also identified as the most helpful veteran-focused resource offered by Bastrop County Cares

**55%**

Named Veterans Bowling as the most helpful veteran resource

**45%**

Identified lack of access to resources as their biggest challenge

# BASTROP COUNTY'S BEST NONPROFIT OF THE YEAR



AWARDED TO



**Bastrop County Cares**

Group: Nonprofit | Category: Civic or Services Clubs | Place: Winner  
Group: Nonprofit | Category: Community Service | Place: Runner Up

[Bastropcares.org](http://Bastropcares.org)

# COLLABORATION IN ACTION



# ***DONOR & PARTNER APPRECIATION***

## **FOUNDATION & GRANT SUPPORT**

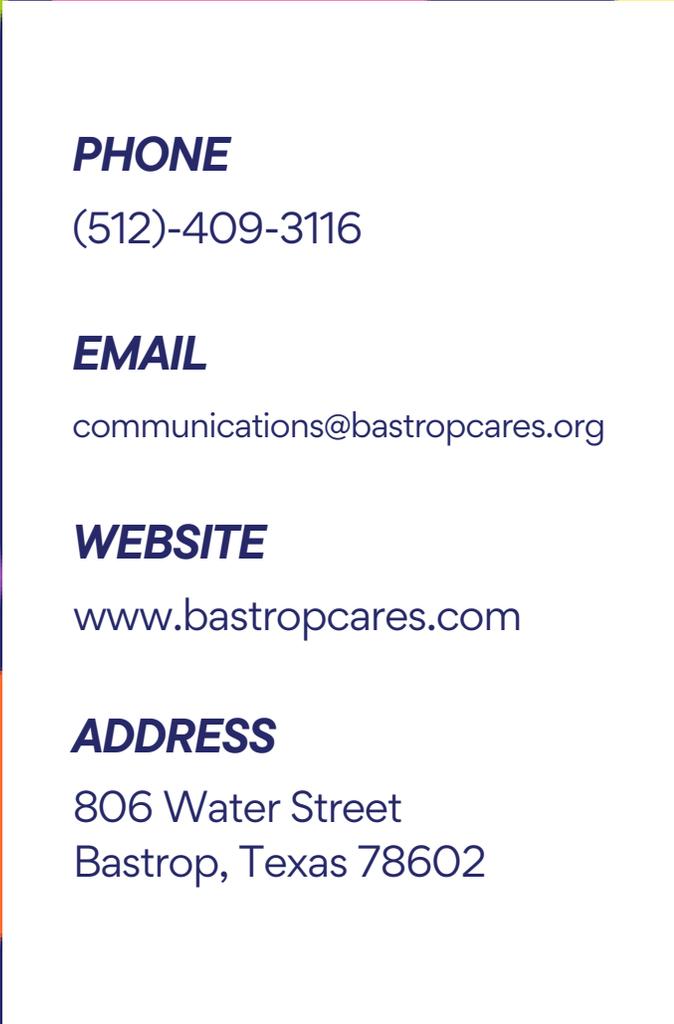
Our work in 2025 was made possible through the generous support of our funders and sponsors, whose investments strengthened programs, expanded access, and advanced community well-being across Bastrop County.

- **St. David's Foundation** — Provided significant multi-year funding, including major grants totaling \$1.5 million, to support community health and engagement initiatives across Bastrop County.
- **Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas** — Awarded operational support grants that strengthened ongoing programming and essential community services.
- **Episcopal Health Foundation** — Funded community voice and engagement efforts advancing health equity and access.
- **Hogg Foundation for Mental Health** — Supported initiatives focused on mental health awareness, prevention, and community-based education.
- **Texas Mutual Fund** — Invested in workforce-related efforts that promote economic stability and employee well-being.
- **National Center for Families Learning** — Funded family literacy and education initiatives supporting lifelong learning.
- **Texas Out of School Time** — Supported high-quality out-of-school programming that enhances youth development and academic success.
- **Health and Human Services** — Provided funding to expand access to critical health and family support services.
- **United Way** — Strengthened local partnerships and community-driven solutions through targeted program investments.

## **COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS**

**Bastrop County Cares leverages a broad coalition of community partners to advance equity and opportunity across Bastrop County. Our network includes health and nutrition partners like Central Texas Food Bank and Bastrop County Emergency Food Pantry; education and youth partners such as local school districts, Head Start, and literacy organizations; social support partners including Community Action and CARTS; and safety and crisis response partners like the Family Crisis Center and Long Term Recovery Team. Through these collaborations, we connect residents to vital services that strengthen families, improve access to care, and build long-term community resilience.**

# CONTACT US



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