



OUR IMPACT | 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Self Help  
BLUFFTON HILTON HEAD HARDEVILLE

# Together. Progress

## DEAR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS,

When we look back on 2025, one word rises to the surface: **stability**.

Not as an abstract concept, but as something tangible — stability at the kitchen table, stability in a paycheck, stability in the quiet confidence that comes from knowing where to turn and how to move forward.

This past year, our community experienced unprecedented need. More neighbors walked through our doors than ever before. There were moments when the demand felt daunting. And yet, because of your generosity and steadfast belief in this mission, we met the moment.

Together, we served **2,331** unique households across the Lowcountry. But what matters most is not simply how many neighbors we served. It is how we served them.

A neighbor may first visit The Market to access fresh, healthy groceries, easing immediate financial pressure at home. From there, they may enroll in GED classes, workforce training, or financial education. Along the way, they may receive emergency financial assistance, advocacy, scholarships, or referrals to trusted community partners. Each layer of support strengthens the next. Each touchpoint builds toward long-term stability.

Last year, **70%** of our neighbors enrolled in more than one program — reflecting our commitment to walk alongside them rather than offer a single solution.

- We shared more than **700,000** pounds of food.
- **607** individuals enrolled in educational or workforce programs.
- **Nine** earned their GED.
- **57** secured employment or advanced their careers.
- We distributed **\$133,175** in emergency assistance and scholarships and made **952** referrals to partners across the region, connecting neighbors to a broader network of support.

Behind every number is a story of resilience — a parent studying after a full workday, a newly naturalized citizen

celebrating a milestone, a family breathing easier because groceries are covered and the next step feels possible.

In 2025, we also completed a comprehensive strategic plan to guide our work in the years ahead. This process allowed us to reflect deeply, clarify our priorities, and strengthen the systems that make holistic support possible. It affirmed what we have long believed: investing in stability strengthens not only individual families, but the entire Lowcountry.

In response, we made two strategic expansion decisions grounded in listening, data, and long-term impact. We advanced plans for the Hardeeville Education and Resource Center, establishing a permanent home for Self Help in Jasper County. On Hilton Head Island, we chose partnership over duplication, collaborating with a trusted nonprofit partner to expand our reach without replicating existing services.

These expansions are not about growth for its own sake. They are about proximity, collaboration, and ensuring that stability is within reach for every corner of Beaufort and Jasper Counties.

Thank you for standing with us through a year that challenged us and strengthened us. Because of you, our neighbors did more than weather uncertainty. They gained footing, confidence, and a clear path forward.

With gratitude,



Cindy Rolfe,  
Board Chair




Courtney Hampson,  
Chief Executive Officer



# A Path Forward

## OUR MISSION

We empower and advocate for Lowcountry neighbors to improve their lives through education and training, basic needs, and guided access to a network of community resources.

## OUR VISION

We envision a community where everyone has equal access to essential tools and resources to support their journey toward personal success.

## LAYERING OUR SERVICES

We support our neighbors holistically, recognizing that no challenge exists in isolation.



# 2,131

### New Program Enrollments

Whether learning in the classroom, accessing resources in The Market, or building skills through workshops, neighbors took intentional steps toward a stronger future with Self Help.

# 2,331

### Unique Households

We reached more than **6,000** neighbors across our community. This 7% increase year over year highlights meaningful growth and underscores the value of equitable access to support, services, and resources needed to pave a path forward.



*"I have to make it"*

## How Sheila Found Support to Thrive

On Thursday afternoons at the Bluffton Farmers Market, Sheila Livingston can often be found behind a modest table, welcoming visitors with a warm smile and a sample of her signature sauce.

At first glance, you might not realize you're standing in the presence of a culinary pioneer. But as neighbors stop to chat and taste her bold Jamaican jerk BBQ sauce, they quickly discover that Sheila once made history as Jamaica's first certified female executive chef.

Her career has carried her through classrooms and kitchens across the Caribbean, mentoring aspiring chefs and leading the culinary teams of premier hotels. It's the kind of résumé that speaks to decades of skill, discipline, and passion.

But like many neighbors in our community, Sheila's journey has included unexpected turns. When she arrived in Bluffton, she was navigating a major life transition while holding onto a dream she had carried for years—to share the bold flavors of her Jamaican heritage through a sauce of her own.

Turning that dream into a business required more than talent. It required encouragement, practical resources, and a community willing to invest in her momentum.

That's where Self Help became part of Sheila's story.

Today, her sauce is beginning to find its way onto local shelves and farmers market tables—but we know this chapter is only the beginning.

*Scan the QR code to discover how Sheila is building her future—one bottle at a time.*



# Basic Needs

When neighbors turn to Self Help during times of crisis, their needs often go beyond a single solution. By listening first and then working alongside each neighbor through a holistic, layered approach, we provide support that empowers them to build stability and keep moving forward.



## THE MARKET

The Market transforms access to food into an opportunity for financial growth. By providing free, nutritious groceries and essentials, families can save up to \$500 per month and use those savings to meet other household needs while paving a path toward greater stability. In 2025, **1,429** families shopped in The Market, representing a **23%** increase over the previous year.



With **601,580** pounds of food shared —valued at **\$1,052,765**—neighbors gained reliable access to fresh groceries, allowing them to stretch their budgets and build a stronger financial foundation.

*We do more than meet urgent needs—we empower neighbors to build a strong foundation for lasting stability and independence.*



**39,741** pieces of clothing – valued at **\$210,627** – were shared with families through The Clothing Closet. Meaning families had access to workwear, school uniforms, and children’s clothing. These essential items ensured neighbors were able to show up ready for work, school, and new opportunities.

## Simple Meals. Big Impact.

One standout moments of 2025 came when Orchid Paulmeier, owner and executive chef of One Hot Mama’s, visited The Market. Moving through the aisles, she selected ingredients on the spot, transforming them into a live cooking demonstration. Her creativity brought to life the simple truth that healthy, flavorful meals can start with what’s right here at The Market.

Scan to watch Chef Orchid’s full demo and bring these heart-healthy recipes into your kitchen.



# A Holistic Approach

Our Client Advocates and volunteers meet individually with every neighbor who walks through Self Help’s doors. Whether enrolling in The Market, seeking Emergency Financial Assistance, or connecting with a partner organization, we listen, understand, and provide guidance that meets their unique needs.

- In 2025, our team facilitated **3,335** one-on-one encounters—a **21%** increase over 2024.
- With the addition of a second bilingual Client Advocate, neighbors can communicate confidently and access support without language barriers.
- We also made **952** referrals to trusted non-profit partners, expanding neighbors’ access to critical services and empowering them to move forward with stability and opportunity.



## EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

When crisis strikes, rent, mortgage, and utility assistance helps neighbors in Bluffton and Jasper County stay in their homes and maintain stability during challenging times. In 2025, **\$119,309** supported **136** households—protecting families from eviction and giving them the security to focus on the next steps in their journey.

In 2025, Self Help also invested **\$13,865** in local students through college scholarships, easing financial barriers and opening the door to higher education. These scholarships provide neighbors the opportunity to pursue their goals, gain new skills, and build a foundation for long-term success.

## LAYERED SUPPORT: THE SWEET SPOT FOR GROWTH

Layered support is where impact multiplies. In 2025, **70%** of neighbors were enrolled in more than one program, allowing us to meet interconnected needs. From access to nutritious food and clothing to financial assistance and educational opportunities, this approach ensures neighbors can address immediate challenges while building a foundation for lasting growth and opportunity.



# Education & Workforce Programs

**\$774,468** INVESTED IN 607 STUDENTS

Education changes trajectories. Through GED, ESL, citizenship, workforce programs and more, we equip neighbors with the credentials and skills to access livable wage careers. Increased earnings, reduced financial strain, and renewed confidence create ripple effects that extend to children, employers, and the broader community. When one person advances, the entire region grows stronger.

**529** ESL students were present in our classrooms, **68%** moving to the next level.

**59** GED students committed to their education journey, **16** students graduated, while the rest continue to work toward their diploma.

**8** students were supported as they achieved their US Citizenship.

**31** Financial Literacy graduates left with a better understanding of their finances.

**57** neighbors landed jobs after working with our Client Advocates.



## CHASING POSSIBILITY: SABRINA'S JOURNEY TOWARD HER GED

When Sabrina first came to Self Help, she was working full-time at a job she enjoyed—but the quiet pull for something more kept tugging at her. She knew earning her GED was the key to unlocking new opportunities, yet the thought of returning to the classroom felt intimidating. Still, she took a brave first step and asked for help.

Much to her own surprise, Sabrina quickly became a shining example of what's possible when determination meets support. Today, after work, she heads straight to class, rarely missing a session, and consistently showing up ready to push herself further. Self Help's program manager proudly notes, "Sabrina is a fantastic student. Because of her incredible work ethic, she isn't just getting the work done, she's excelling—scoring very high in both test performance and comprehension."

Having already completed more than half of the GED program, Sabrina's confidence continues to grow, and her skills strengthen—each step forward offering a measure of healing to the younger version of herself who once doubted her abilities.

With her dedication and a community standing firmly beside her, there's no doubt: Sabrina's future is wide open, filled with possibilities she now knows she deserves.

# Community Programs & Resources

Over 60% of households in Beaufort and Jasper counties earn less than a livable wage. Our donors and community partners are the driving force behind the support and opportunities that help neighbors turn obstacles into opportunity and build stronger futures.



## FRESH XPRESS PROGRAM

Fresh Xpress, Self Help's free monthly farmers market, is made possible through partnership with the Lowcountry Food Bank. By providing neighbors with fresh, nutrient-dense produce, these collaborations bridge gaps while supporting household wellness and financial stability.

In 2025, responding to growing need in Hardeeville, we launched a second Fresh Xpress pop-up on the USCB Okatie campus, expanding access to even more families. Across both markets, 85,211 pounds of produce were distributed, reaching an average of 271 families each month—demonstrating how the power of partnership directly transforms the health and wellbeing of our community.



## FUELING STUDENTS, STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Self Help, with the generosity of our donors and community partners, provides healthy snacks to all 10 Bluffton public schools. By addressing food insecurity at the classroom level, these snacks help students stay focused, engaged, and ready to learn.

This support is part of our broader approach to layered, holistic care—complementing programs like The Market, The Clothing Closet, and Emergency Financial Assistance—so that families and students receive the resources they need to thrive. Even small, consistent acts, like nutritious snacks, create a foundation for confidence, growth, and long-term success for our youngest neighbors.

**28,159** school snacks, a value of **\$49,278** were distributed through the school year to ensure all Bluffton students were equipped to learn.



## THE HOLIDAYS AT SELF HELP

Each holiday season, Self Help ensures neighbors can celebrate with dignity and joy through **Turkeys to Toys**—providing Thanksgiving meals, holiday groceries, and toys for children. These essential resources help families reduce financial stress, create festive traditions, and focus on togetherness rather than worry.

In 2025, **145,026** pounds of food were distributed for the holidays, a value of **\$253,795** for our neighbors.

**10,982** holiday toys were distributed, a value of **\$163,557** to spread hope and happiness to more than 1,300 children in our community.

## GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Alicia Carlson goes the extra mile—literally—to support her students. Traveling by golf cart, ferry, and car, she makes the journey between Daufuskie Island and Self Help’s Hilton Head classrooms, ensuring her students have consistent access to the tools and encouragement they need to grow.

As an ESL tutor, Alicia brings more than her time; she brings patience, compassion, and a deep belief in her students’ potential. Her dedication creates a welcoming space where neighbors build confidence, strengthen communication skills, and open doors to new opportunities for themselves and their families.

Volunteers like Alicia are at the heart of Self Help’s impact, helping transform classrooms into places of empowerment and connection.



Scan the QR code to hear directly from Alicia about her journey and what inspires her to serve.



## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS



**Joy Nelson**  
Volunteer Tutor

## Powered by People

Self Help is sustained by a community of compassionate individuals who step forward to support their neighbors again and again.

In 2025, **370 volunteers** generously shared their time and talents, including **112 new volunteers** who joined our mission. Together, they contributed **32,376 hours of service**—an extraordinary investment valued at **\$1,126,373**.



**Kimberly Bart**  
Basic Needs Volunteer

## *Expanding Access.* Strengthening Connection.

We know there is significant work to be done in our community, and we cannot do it alone. Lasting change does not happen in isolation. It takes a network of committed partners, aligned in purpose and willing to move the needle together. When nonprofits collaborate rather than compete, our neighbors receive stronger, more coordinated support.

On Hilton Head Island, we chose partnership over duplication. By collaborating with a trusted nonprofit partner, the Deep Well Project, we are expanding our presence without replicating services that already exist. This approach strengthens the nonprofit ecosystem and ensures that resources are used strategically. Through this partnership, we are increasing space for our adult education programming while expanding access to case management support. The result is greater reach, stronger coordination, and more comprehensive service for neighbors who need layered solutions.

In 2025, we also advanced plans for the Self Help's Hardeeville Education and Resource Center, establishing a permanent home in Jasper County. For too long, neighbors in this community have traveled outside their area to access services or relied on limited touchpoints. This Center creates space not only for our education, workforce, and advocacy programs, but also for collaboration. Our goal is to welcome fellow nonprofits into the space, reduce barriers to access, and seamlessly connect neighbors to a broader network of support.

As we look toward 2026, we remain committed to cultivating and deepening these partnerships. By layering not only our own services, but also the expertise and resources of trusted partners, we are building a stronger foundation for stability across the Lowcountry. Together, we can ensure that no neighbor has to navigate challenges alone and that our collective impact is greater than any one organization could achieve on its own.



*Scan the QR code to listen to a podcast featuring our Hilton Head Island partnership.*



**Courtney Hampson with Sandy Gillis of the Deep Well Project.**



**Building plans for the Hardeeville Education and Resource Center.**

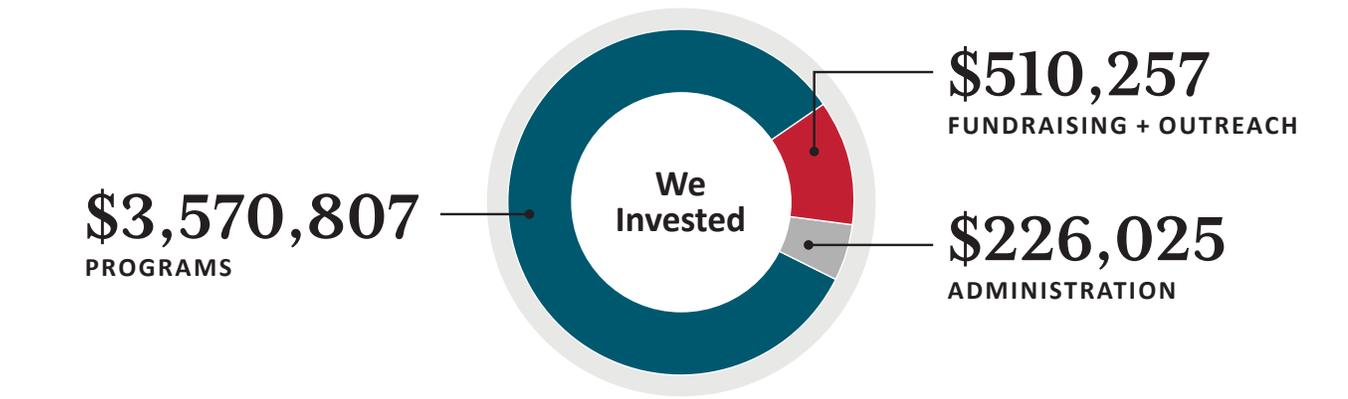
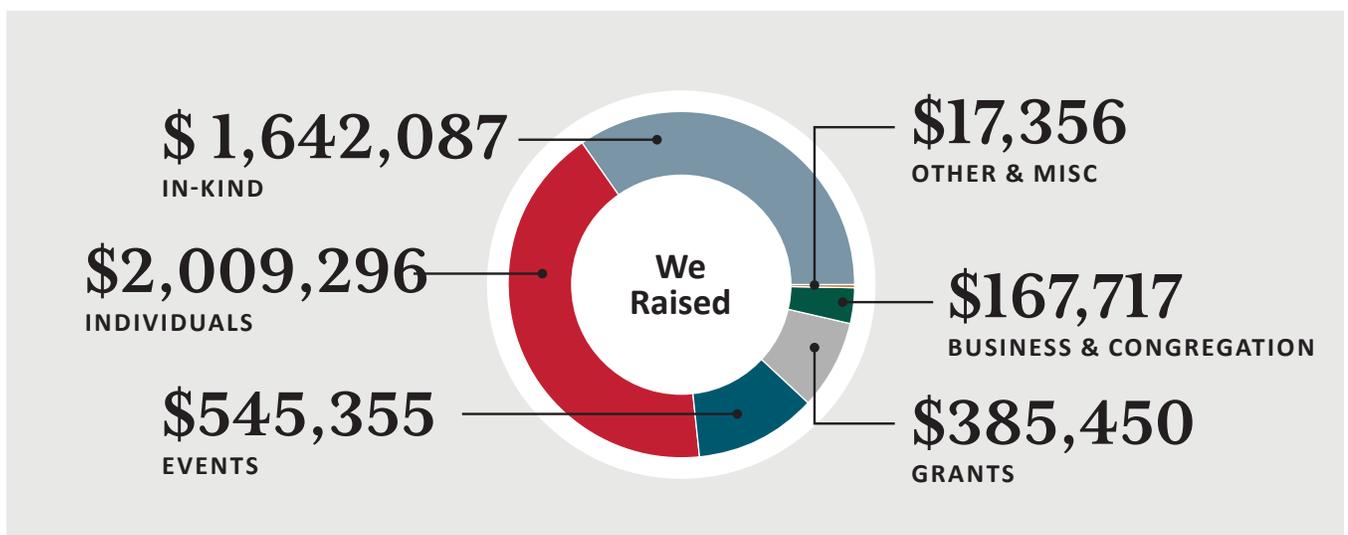


**The official beginning of our construction.**

# Financials

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

This work has always been a collective effort. To our donors, volunteers, board members, and staff, thank you for showing up consistently and generously. You are the reason we can meet immediate needs while building long-term paths forward.





## *Connect with us*

**GET INVOLVED** | Visit our website to learn more about our programs and how you can help.

**[WWW.BLUFFTONSELFHELP.ORG](http://WWW.BLUFFTONSELFHELP.ORG)**

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