



DeKalb County
GEORGIA



2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT



BUILDING EXCELLENCE IN DEKALB

VISION

To become a world class Center of Excellence where seniors age well.

MISSION

Maximize independence and enhance the quality of life for seniors in DeKalb County by serving as a focal point for information and service.

GOALS

- Enhance LWSC operations to become a nationally recognized senior center by the National Council on Aging
- Increase VOLUNTEERISM
- Improve communications & expand community partnerships
- Expand and enhance the LWSC facility



About Us

The Lou Walker Senior Center is a multipurpose facility for active senior adults age 55 and older and was the first of its kind in DeKalb County. The 40,000 square foot facility offers spaces and amenities to meet the needs and interests of today's active older adults. The architectural structure of the facility and programming are designed to erase stereotypes about the aging process. Creative and innovative programming has been developed utilizing sound principles, a thorough knowledge of the aging process, and standards of practice as defined in the field of gerontology.

The facility offers:

- Land Fitness, Aquatics, Lifelong Learning, and Technology classes, programs and services
- Therapeutic pool
- Computer lab
- Full-service kitchen with Piccadilly on-site
- Full-service Salon and Barbershop
- Classrooms and resource rooms
- Event rental space available on evenings and weekends
- Onsite Social Workers

OUR VISION BOARD





Message From the Director

After five years as director of the Lou Walker Senior Center (LWSC), I am very pleased to share with you progress we made, together, during this time. With the strong support of the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, members, staff, volunteers and advocates, I made a commitment when I arrived to build on Lou Walker's strong foundation and to make a good center even better.

We set a shared goal to have Lou Walker rank among the best senior facilities in the nation, putting together a comprehensive plan to get us there. Our vision was to take it from a full-service center for active seniors to a nationally recognized Center of Excellence, with state-of-the-art programs and services for the community. And so, we began our journey to earn our accreditation through the National Council on Aging.

I am delighted that we just completed our virtual site visit, which is the last step in the accreditation process. While

we won't know the outcome for several months, we are all very encouraged and hopeful that we will earn this distinction. We have worked hard on center improvements and enhancements and have been reviewed on nine standards that accredited facilities must meet. Let's keep our hopes high that Lou Walker will become the first senior center in DeKalb County to earn the "Center of Excellence" designation.


Getting to this point, has taken the leadership of the Board of Commissioners, particularly, Commissioner Mereda Johnson, in whose district Lou Walker sits, CEO Michael Thurmond, Damon Scott, Director of Human Services, Allen Mitchell, Director of Community Development, our excellent Lou Walker staff, our loyal members and our many volunteers and supporters.

Because of consistent support and encouragement from each of you, we have been able to reach new heights at Lou Walker. Our proudest accomplishments in the last five years have included:

- Nearly tripling Lou Walker's membership from 1,072 to 3,038
- Increasing member engagement with the creation of the LWSC Council of Excellence to provide a way for members to help shape the center's future
- Adding four new classrooms and replacing the victory room chairs
- Upgrading the aquatics center by resurfacing the pool and installing new locker rooms for men and women
- Increasing handicap parking from seven spaces to 18
- Improving signage throughout the center, making it easier to navigate
- Introducing digital information boards
- Improving the exterior, including resurfacing and landscaping
- Upgrading the HVAC System
- Reopening the LWSC Hair Salon
- Submitting our application for accreditation in 2019, but having it delayed because of COVID, then completing the process in 2021

I hope you share my pride in all that has been done to further strengthen the Lou Walker Center, which enhances the lives of the seniors we serve. It has been my great privilege to be a part of this wonderful organization.

Bettye Davis
LWSC DIRECTOR

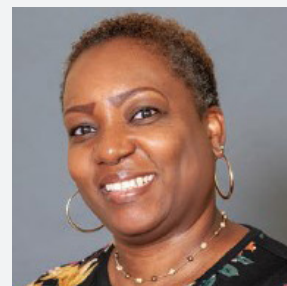


“ Let’s keep our hopes high that Lou Walker will become the first center in DeKalb County to earn the “Center of Excellence” designation. ”



Erica King

FACILITY COORDINATOR



Bridgette Thompson

FACILITY COORDINATOR

2019-2020 Highlights

- Expanded Community partnerships and created new intergenerational opportunities
- Developed, implemented, & managed Lifelong Learning & Physical Wellness Virtual Platform
- Completed enhancements to internal and external areas of facility
- Distributed healthy meals to isolated seniors with limited resources
- Converted all center classes and programming to online platforms in response to COVID-19




WELLNESS CHECKS
16,303



COURSES
63



COMMUNITY & EDUCATIONAL EVENTS
28



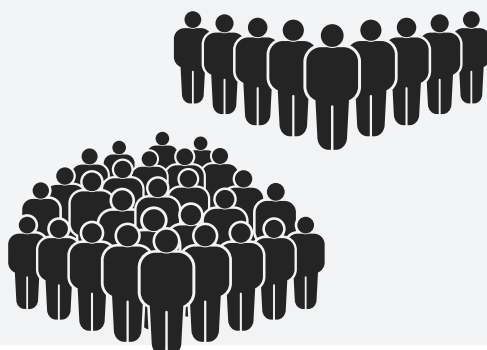
VIRTUAL VISITS
39,508



ZOOM CLASSROOM HOURS
3,337

3219
members

49,606
in-person visits from
Jan - Mar 2020





Our Goals For 2021

- REOPEN CENTER
- ONBOARDING OF NEW VENDOR FOR LWSC CAFE
- ONBOARDING OF NEW VENDOR FOR AQUATICS CLASSES & POOL MANAGEMENT
- FULLY IMPLEMENT SUCCESSION PLAN

Our Plans

- To continue supporting the needs of seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic, by identifying innovative ways of providing programming and access to support services
- To continue fostering relationships by creating effective partnerships, intergenerational experiences, and volunteer opportunities
- To continue classroom and facility enhancements in preparation for the return of members post-pandemic.
- Continue to engage the Membership through the Council of Excellence.

Covid-19 Response

As a center that serves active seniors aged 55+ in DeKalb County, Georgia, Lou Walker Senior Center (LWSC) was called upon to act immediately to protect the well-being of our members when the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic began.



As the number of people affected grew, both in Georgia and in our county, we began to formulate a plan of action, including development of a communications plan to update seniors on the center closing, and to educate them on the virus itself, and particularly the threat it poses to seniors and those with pre-existing health challenges.

DeKalb virtual platform was expanded to include seniors from DeKalb's four neighborhood centers. Seniors without the technology to participate in classes were provided with a laptop computer and wi-fi hotspot. To date, **63 course offerings** are available and 2028 virtual attendees participated last year.



We closed the center in March 2020, and on day one of closing, launched a wellness check phone campaign, in which our employees working from home contacted each of our 3,000+ members to assess their circumstances, including support systems, supply of personal protective equipment, and access to adequate food supply. As the pandemic continued, it became critical to identify ways to continue offering services to members. We identified the program areas that could be seamlessly converted to virtual offerings, in a way that provided members with easy access and maintained the same level of quality. We pinpointed our classes as the best area of focus.

As the pandemic advanced throughout the summer and fall of 2020, the impact on the community increased, creating or amplifying new issues for seniors, including isolation, food insecurity, and threats to their housing. LWSC partnered with several agencies and identified resources to meet the senior's needs in each of these areas:

- Hosted the DeKalb Community COVID-19 PPE Giveaway & Safety Drive-Thru
- In partnership with DeKalb For Seniors, Inc, awarded **\$30,000** in grant funding from the DeKalb County CARES Act for establishment of a COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund, providing seniors and their families with funds to prevent eviction or foreclosure, utility shut off, or hunger.



Within the first month of closing, all in-person classes were converted to a virtual platform. We trained staff, instructors, and 20 volunteers on virtual course delivery and administration, and provided members with instructions for registering and attending

Program Evaluation

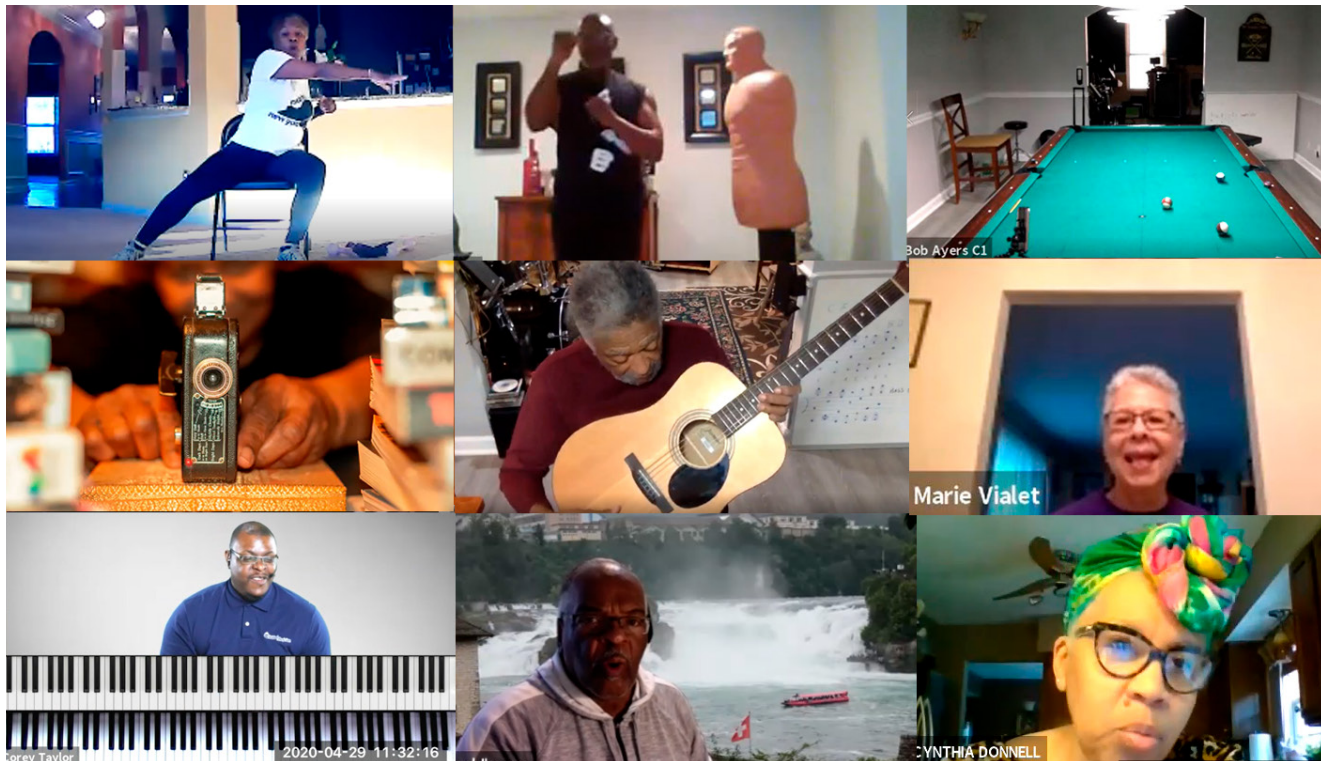
Each year, we evaluate our programming and conduct assessments to determine member levels of participation and satisfaction with learning, social, and support programming.

Our goal is to identify the best performing program areas that should continue, and programs that did not perform as well as others. From there, we make changes to existing programming and plan new classes, groups, activities, and special events.

Due to the unexpected challenges presented by the pandemic in 2020, we had to find new and innovative ways to offer programs. Based on verbal feedback from our members, we knew that health & wellness information and personal enrichment were two needs that we had to find a way to meet. Virtual learning and online social activities became the focus of our programming efforts. As programming went virtual, so did instructor and class evaluations, which when implemented resulted in a 35% response rate for surveys.

With health being the center of the national conversation, our programming shift focused there first, with emphasis on information, resources, support, and treatment. Our programming included drive-thru services offering flu vaccines and COVID-19 information and testing. We hosted several programs on topics ranging from breast cancer to home décor and self-care; we also developed, implemented, & managed Lou Walker's Lifelong Learning & Physical Wellness Virtual Platform.

We have tracked a significant level of member participation in virtual programs, with strong positive feedback from participants. These programs are slated to continue during the closing of the LWSC facility and are under ongoing review to identify new needs and areas of interest.



Programming

Lou Walker's commitment to helping our seniors live well-rounded, fulfilling lives calls upon us to stay in touch with the issues, interests, and trends concerning impacting seniors today.

Over the course of the last two years, we have sought out ways to leverage tools like social media to expand our members' exposure to relevant topics. We also held several successful in-person workshops, lunch-n-learns, and virtual events to share information about current topics including voting rights, finance, health, and self-care, including:

-
- Lunch & Learn Session with Jeremey Striegel of Atlanta Legal Aid
 - Diabetes Education Presentation – Emory's Doc Talks
 - Black History Month Production "Be the Change Vote!"
 - Black History Month Presentation - "Vote, Vote, Vote", - LWSC Drama Club
 - Myeloma Awareness Presentation - Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
 - Business and Community Expo – Dekalb for Seniors, Inc.
 - AARP Smart Driver Safety Course - AARP
 - Vein Health - with Dr. Sachin B. Sheth
 - Census Expo - DeKalb Human Services
 - Lunch & Learn with Social Security Administration
 - A Breast Cancer Survivor's Story - Presenter Dr. Tonya Echols Cole, Radiation Oncologist – Emory Healthcare
 - Hypertension - Presenter Bethany Harris, Registered Dietitian, Kaiser Permanente
 - Smart Driver TEK Free Workshop – AARP
 - "Self-Care" - Presenter Alice Mullins
 - Senior Homestead Exemption - DeKalb County Tax Commissioner's Office



“ This is truly a well thought out program that is an asset to our senior community. GREAT JOB!” ”

Volunteerism.

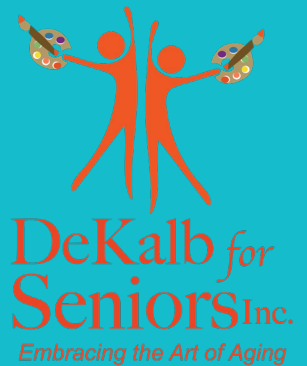
Lou Walker Senior Center has always believed in the spirit of volunteerism. In addition to the team of dedicated volunteers that helps our staff operate the center each day, we have also built a group of senior volunteers who serve as tutors, mentors, and caregivers to others in the community. In 2020, we looked to our volunteers for the extra hands needed to provide support to our members at home during the pandemic. We also created successful intergenerational volunteer opportunities in partnership with local schools. Our volunteer successes include:

- Trained 20 volunteers to assist with hosting virtual classes.
- DeKalb for Seniors fundraised over \$40,000 in 2020
- Recruited volunteers and hosted site for AARP Experience Corps Volunteer Training

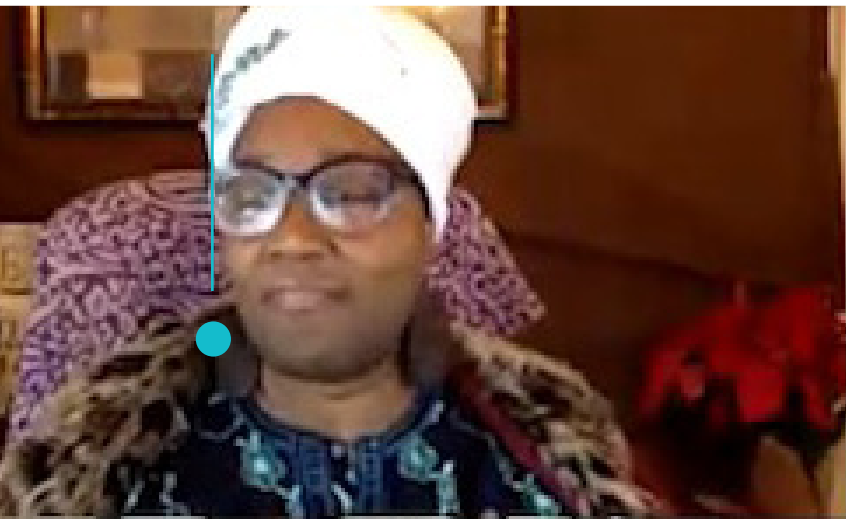
As working directly with people through LWSC falls within the guidelines and policies set forth for all Lou Walker staff and associates, we also completed an update of our volunteer & instructor handbooks, which are distributed to all volunteers who sign on to serve at or through LWSC.



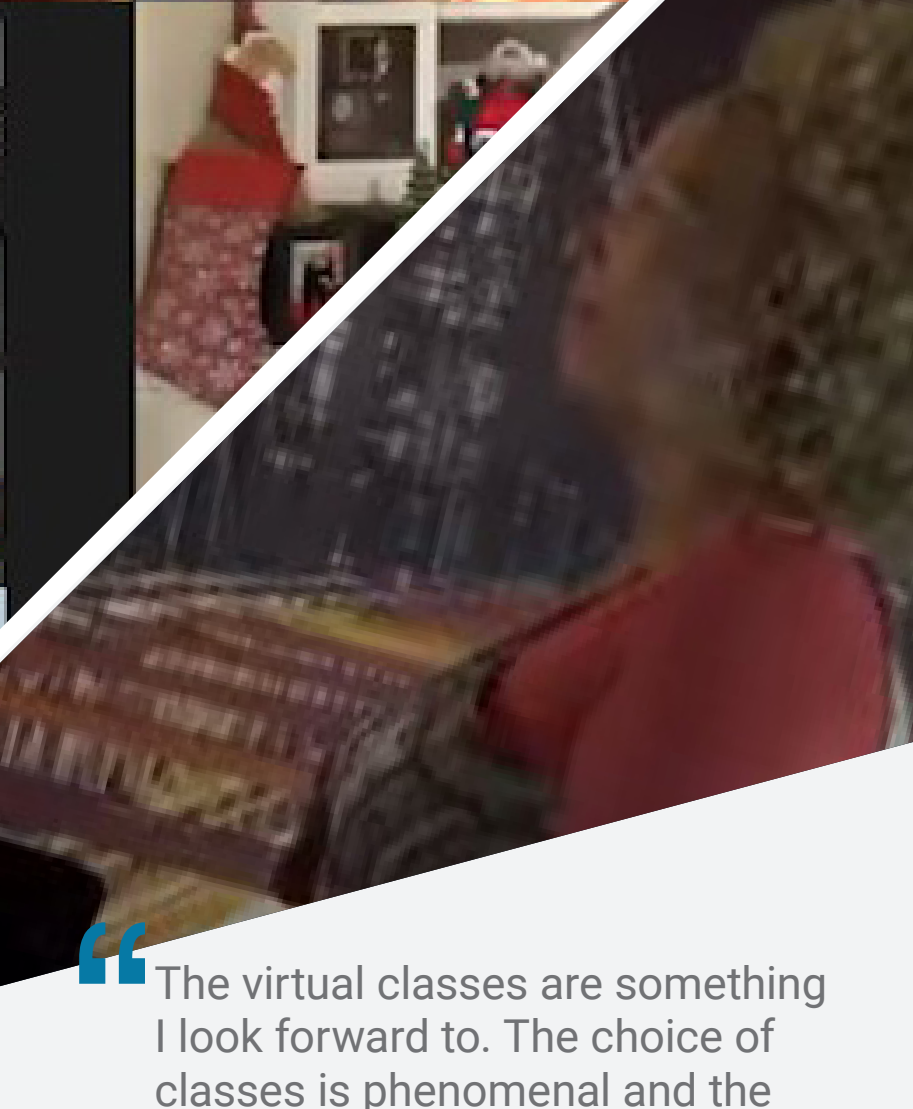
Marcia Glenn-Hunter
President
DeKalb For Seniors, Inc.



-live long



Rochelle Evans



e Taylor

“The virtual classes are something I look forward to. The choice of classes is phenomenal and the instructors and hosts are great.”

Social Wellness

Social interaction is an important part of senior health and wellness. LWSC has always made social activities a critical component of our programming, as many of our members live alone, and find most opportunities to fellowship with other seniors take place at the center. With the COVID-19 pandemic requiring social distancing particularly among seniors, isolation, anxiety, and depression posed a true threat to the health and well-being of our members. In response, we converted many of our already planned activities to online platforms and created new virtual social and entertainment opportunities as well. We conducted several successful pre-pandemic and pandemic-response virtual events and activities, including:

Intergenerational Social Activities

- Established Intergenerational Partnerships & hosted 1st Intergenerational Community Expo
- Host two social wellness events - Intergenerational and Caregiver Support

Social Events

- Community Kwanzaa celebration – LWSC African American History Class
- LWSC Virtual Comedy Hour – COE
- Virtual Games for Seniors with Tracie Lee Hawkins

Entertainment

- LWSC Drama Club Presents “Ain’t No Stopping Us Now”
- LWSC Virtual Holiday Paloosa, an afternoon of Holiday Music & Magic - LWSC Staff
- Lou Walker Center and Friends Inspiration Talent Show -COE
- LWSC Drama Club Virtual Production “Acting Up”
- “Lou Walker Senior Center’s Women of Achievement” – Photographic Exhibit by Sharon Dowdell

Facility Enhancements

In 2019, we began work toward our goal of enhancing the LWSC facility. Our goal was to make enhancements that would allow members to enjoy a beautiful, state of the art, and overall safe center. After assessing the condition of every part of the facility, we created a list of project goals, and through late 2019 into 2020, successfully completed the following enhancements:

Aquatics

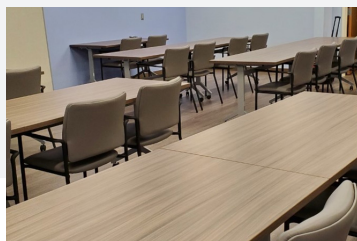
- Concluded enhancement to men & women's aquatics locker rooms to include new floors and benches
- Applied fresh paint to all locker rooms
- Installed new, comfortable benches
- Replaced swimming pool pump
- Replaced swimming pool lights
- Purchase new swimming pool cleaning and safety supplies

Victory Room & Cafeteria

- Resurfaced office floors
- Fulfilled purchase of new chairs for Victory Room
- Replaced Victory Room Condenser unit
- Cleaned commercial kitchen floors and equipment

Classrooms & Exterior

- Completed construction of four new classrooms
- Installed state of the art monitors and digital wall displays
- Completed expansion of handicap parking to 26 total spaces





MEMBERSHIP HEALTH REPORT

Lou Walker Senior Center's membership has maintained consistent enrollment through 2019 – 2020. We focused on retaining members through communication and outreach efforts, specifically focused on meeting the needs of members during the health crisis. As we continue to respond to this need, we are planning membership campaigns for the coming year. Our goal is to deepen our partnerships with other senior centers across DeKalb County, to offer services to seniors who do not have access to full-service centers in their communities.

Based on feedback from seniors, areas of greatest importance and satisfaction continue in the following areas:

- Variety of membership offerings (classes, events)
- Attendance of multiple courses
- Participation in club/ organizations
- Special events
- Meal services
- Social interaction with other members

Because of the excellent programming and the variety of class offerings, the Lou Walker Senior Center membership is currently at capacity. Through our in-house offerings as well as through partnerships with community agencies, we continue to add new ways to enhance the quality of our members' lives.



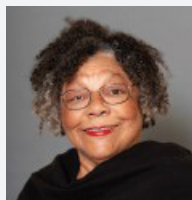
“ I’m so thankful for these classes and will continue taking them until we can meet in person. ”



Member Engagement, Marketing & Communications

2020 became a year focused on innovative communication. With social distancing becoming a required part of our lives, we needed to ramp up our efforts to stay connected with our members and to help them stay connected with each other. We provided access to our virtual platform to the broader senior community, providing learning and social activities for non-members within and beyond DeKalb County. We also prioritized multi-platform information, mounting a successful campaign to increase our newsletter outreach, email subscribers, open rates, web traffic, and social media usage. We continue to use these tools to share information about center activities as well as updates about COVID-19 safety, regulations, and treatment.

This 2019-2020 Annual Report will be released and published on the LWSC website for public view. In addition to the Annual Report, policies and procedures will undergo an annual review and approval process, with revised versions published internally. All documentation will be revised to fall into compliance with National Center on Aging (NCOA) Center of Excellence standards.



Charleen Knox
President
Council of excellence

Our Community Partners

Lou Walker Senior Center would like to thank the following professionals, companies, and community agencies for their support of the needs of our members through the unique and difficult COVID-19 crisis. With their help, our members were able to receive the support they needed when they needed it most.



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Commissioner
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Chief Executive Officer
of DeKalb County



Damon Scott
Director
DeKalb Human Services Dept

THE DREAM TEAM



Katherine Smith
Customer Service
Specialist



Dawn West
Customer Service
Specialist



Gloria Daniel
Member Services



Elayn Ansari
Member Services



Jonquil Harris
Program &
Communications



Gabriel Murphy
Member Intake &
Data Management



Chiquita Thomas
Special Events &
Marketing



Cynthia Donnell
facility Rentals



Tyrone Bailey
Health & Wellness



Ilma Hodge
Senior Fiscal Officer



Mary McCray
Volunteer Management



Prentiss Noland
Building Maintenance



Latarsha Williams
Human Services
Administrator



Sharyn Hailey
Social Worker

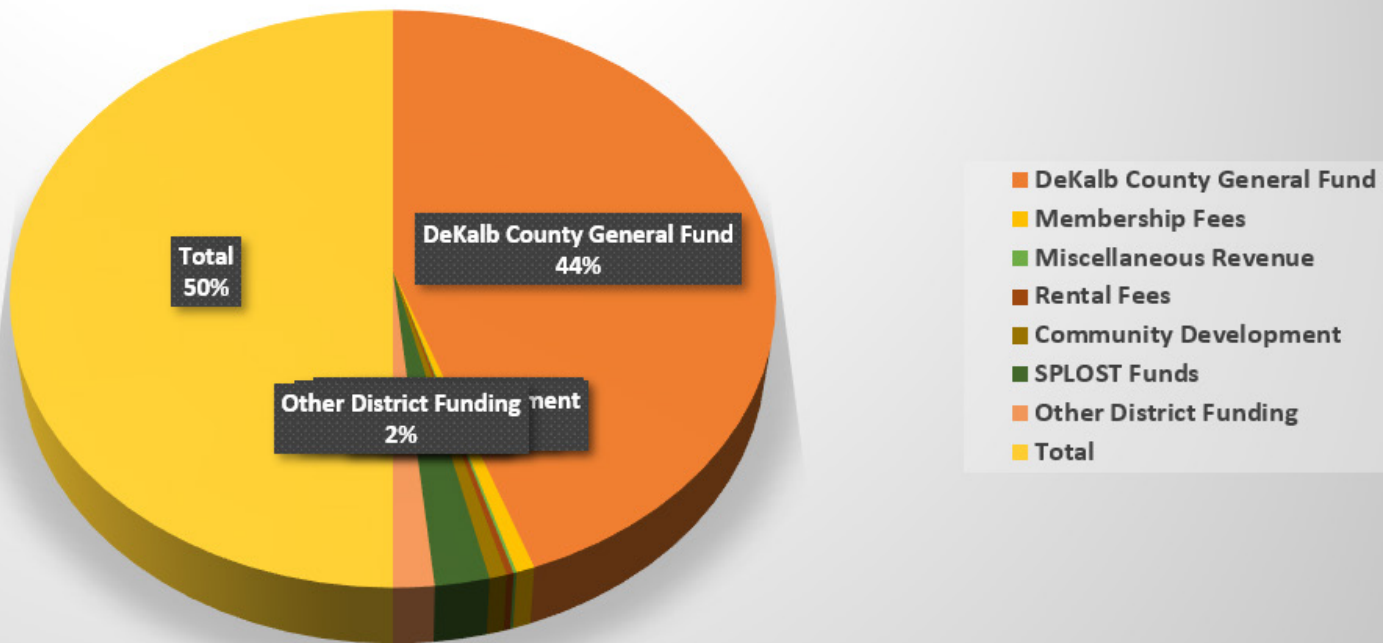


Brenda Colbert
Social Worker



Antilik Black
Salon Operations

Lou Walker Senior Funding - 2020



Lou Walker Senior Center Funding - 2020	
DeKalb County General Fund	\$1,131,457.00
Membership Fees	\$72,415.00
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$12,146.00
Rental Fees	\$27,853.00
Community Development	\$67,960.00
SPLOST Funds	\$212,871.00
Other District Funding	\$159,987.00
Total	\$1,684,689.00

2019-2020 PUBLICATION OF ANNUAL REPORT



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Web sites

<https://louwalkercenter.com/>

