

PATHWAY TO EMPOWERMENT



Knoxville Area
Urban League

2020 Annual Report Executive Summary

President's Message

Dear Friends of the Urban League,

What a 2020 it has been for everyone. The past year brought challenges that made every organization adjust the way it operated because of the pandemic.

As a trusted community resource for more than 50 years, the mission of the Knoxville Area Urban League is to step up for the community. We provide the people we serve with skills needed to navigate and overcome personal and professional obstacles, and 2020 meant that we really had to become economic first responders.

We invest in people, launch careers and businesses and transform lives. A pandemic can't change what we do – and that is to create Pathways to Empowerment for individuals, families and businesses.

Our partners also are the lifeblood of our efforts, and we thank all of you for helping the Knoxville Area Urban League and especially how you continued to step up in 2020.

For example, Shoes for School looked very different last year due to COVID-19, but the kids more than ever needed the school supplies and shoes. Our partnering agencies picked up shoes and school supplies to distribute, and the Knoxville Area Urban League held a drive-by event to give out school supplies. Even through the pandemic, we pivoted and provided new shoes and school supplies to the children who were most in need.

Individuals needed help to keep their small businesses afloat, especially minority-owned businesses, which are less likely to receive loans than non-minority-owned businesses and when awarded, receive loans at a lesser amount. We switched to virtual sessions and still held workshops, entrepreneurship training and a business pitch contest. In 2020, nearly \$225,000 of deployed capital was provided to small businesses.

The Knoxville Area Urban League still has a highly engaged board of directors, committed staff and dedicated volunteers who serve the organization and community with great passion and purpose. Our impact and longevity are due, in large part, to the support of a diverse community of partnerships and individual donations.

Our efforts to impact individuals and families through advocacy, collaborations and strategic programming did not stop in a pandemic. And it will continue in 2021. We all came together this year – and our work must continue for equality and economic growth in Knoxville as we begin to emerge from a pandemic.

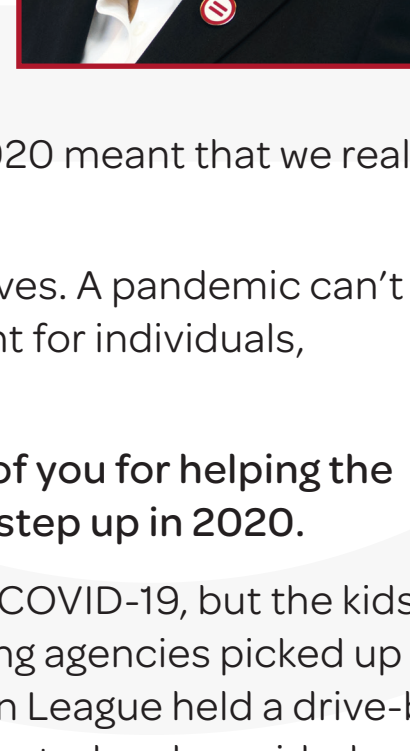
Please continue your support and join our efforts at the Knoxville Area Urban League.

We need you. We thank you. YOU made an impact.

With gratitude,

Phyllis Y. Nichols

Phyllis Y. Nichols
President and Chief
Executive Officer



Workforce Development

THE ISSUE: In a virtual yet tight job market, the employment needs are greater for the more diverse sector of our community.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Through the pandemic, The Knoxville Area Urban League had to pivot and serve most of our clients virtually through our workforce program. Individuals received one-on-one career counseling, coaching sessions, lunch-and-learn seminars, career readiness workshops, training for online employment applications and job searching tools.

Every adult in America should have equal access to resources that enhance employability and job mobility, including post-secondary education and training. Work is empowering. Work gives purpose and dignity to life, provides families with economic and social stability and contributes to our community.

Our job readiness and employment programs facilitate the process, so individuals can identify, prepare for, attain and maintain employment and self-sufficiency. Our programs are geared toward the unemployed and underemployed. We also work with employers to identify employment opportunities, as well as identify and pre-screen employees.

INVESTORS

- United Way of Greater Knoxville
- National Urban League
- Bank of America
- Comcast
- Tennessee Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services
- National Retail Federation
- City of Knoxville

Education and Youth

THE ISSUE: Today's student needs out-of-school support and a wide range of competencies to succeed. It's a virtual world now, and many minority students do not have access to technology to help them prepare for college and to succeed. Education partners must place a priority on supporting academic growth for students of color and students living in poverty.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- **144 scholars** inducted into the National Achievers Society virtually for the first time.
- **65 senior** scholars graduated, and
- **98%** enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions.
- Knoxville Area Urban League scholars have taken on the virtual world of learning,

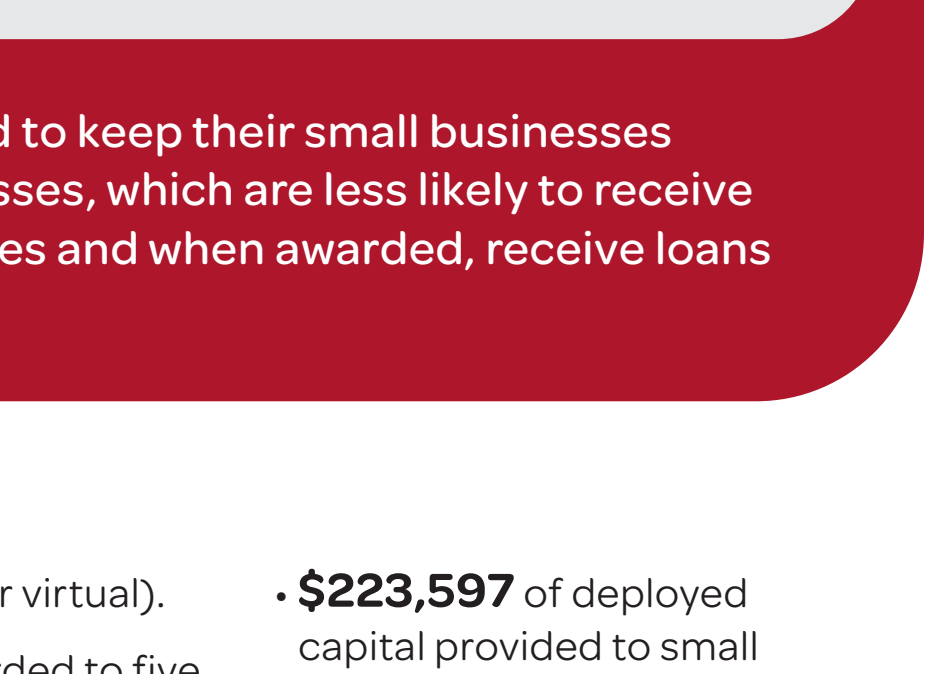
pivoted well and are growing through the pandemic. We know they will show the world what they are made of and how they persevered.

NATIONAL ACHIEVER'S SOCIETY (NAS)

National Achievers Society (NAS) empowers today's youth to become tomorrow's leaders. The society was established to identify and motivate academically achieving minority high school students and increase the pool of students who are prepared, motivated and qualified for higher education. NAS is open to African American youth and other youth of color in grades 10-12 with a 3.0 or higher cumulative grade point average and represents every high school in Knox County, Oak Ridge and Jefferson County. The scholars and parents participate throughout the school year in weekend activities, projects and initiatives that enhance their cultural, academic and college preparatory experience in a three-year program from their sophomore through senior year.

SHOES FOR SCHOOL

Shoes for School looked different in 2020 due to COVID-19. However, due to the pandemic, the kids more than ever needed the supplies and shoes. Our partnering agencies picked up shoes and school supplies for their kids, and the Knoxville Area Urban League also held a drive-by event to give out school supplies. Even through the pandemic, we pivoted and provided new shoes and school supplies to kids who were most in need.



INVESTORS

- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Covenant Health
- East Tennessee Children's Hospital
- National Urban League

Economic and Business Development

THE ISSUE: In 2020, individuals struggled to keep their small businesses afloat, especially minority-owned businesses, which are less likely to receive loans than non-minority-owned businesses and when awarded, receive loans at a lesser amount.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- **209 individuals** attended workshops and seminars (via in person or virtual).
- **28 individuals** received **20 weeks** of entrepreneurship training
- **10** (via in person or virtual).
- **\$10,500** awarded to five individuals in business pitch contest.
- **72 individuals** received 1-to-1 technical assistance (pre-COVID).
- **\$223,597** of deployed capital provided to small businesses.
- **\$5.4 million** small business loan portfolio managed.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Every individual in America who possesses entrepreneurial vision, ingenuity, drive and desire should have access to resources needed to establish and grow a viable business.

The Knoxville Area Urban League helps to bring businesses and jobs to areas where poverty is an everyday reality and people have been profoundly affected by long-term unemployment. The loans and technical assistance are strategic investments that will build strong economic ecosystems, which will support entrepreneurship and business growth in economically disadvantaged communities.

PROGRAMS:

- **Empowerment Opportunity Loan Program:** The Knoxville Area Urban League is a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI); we provide loans from \$5,000-\$250,000 to qualified entrepreneurs to start and/or expand businesses in Knox County that will provide jobs, goods and services that meet the needs of the community.
- As a **Community Development and Financial Institution (CDFI)**, our lending programs and technical assistance are strategic investments that will build strong economic ecosystems, which, in turn, will support entrepreneurship and business growth in economically disadvantaged areas.
- The **CO.STARTERS** program walks creative small business owners through lean, effective business modeling methods in simple and intuitive ways. Rather than treating a start-up business like a large corporation and writing a lengthy business plan, CO.STARTERS participants are encouraged to build and test small models. Participants receive real-time customer feedback, update the models to meet customer needs and avoid creating businesses based on incorrect assumptions.

INVESTORS

- U.S. Department of the Treasury – CDFI Fund
- Pinnacle Bank
- SunTrust Foundation
- City of Knoxville
- Tennessee Valley Authority

Housing and Community Development

THE ISSUE: Due to COVID-19 and job loss, housing issues now confront people at every income level. But homeownership remains the American dream.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- **30 clients** received counseling to address, resolve or prevent foreclosure (via in person or virtual).
- **41 clients** received counseling to address, resolve or prevent eviction (via in person or virtual).
- **136 clients** finished financial education course (via in person or virtual).
- **107 clients** purchased homes with total economic impact of \$16.5 million
- **331 clients** served overall.
- **124 clients** completed homebuyer education course (via in person or virtual).

HOUSING COUNSELING

Our housing counselors engage clients in goal setting, budgeting, credit building, helping negotiate terms with agents and identifying emergency and financial assistance. As an affiliate of the National Urban League, we tailor our services to our community and work with a diverse group of public and private organizations to increase impact. Every adult in America should have access to the financial security that comes from owning a home.

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION

We help distressed homeowners understand, evaluate and navigate a financial crisis by providing specific action steps and, when possible, helping them avoid foreclosure by negotiating an affordable loan modification or terms of forbearance.

FINANCIAL CAPACITY BUILDING

As an organization, we focus on empowering people to earn more, manage and retain more of what they earn, reduce debt, enhance credit scores, increase savings and build assets.

INVESTORS

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- National Urban League
- East Tennessee Foundation
- Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA)
- BB&T
- United Way of Greater Knoxville
- City of Knoxville
- Knox County



OUR ADVOCACY AGENDA

We change lives through advocacy, especially for those who do not understand how public policy impacts their lives.

Working with national policy leaders, the Tennessee Department of Education, elected officials, and especially our local districts, school board and teachers, we strive to make our public schools the best possible for all students.

The Urban League Movement supports public education as the best way to create equitable

opportunities for families, children and youth to advance and succeed.

Our advocacy agenda also includes building a strong bridge between education and work; providing more pathways for youth and adults to secure a quality education and employment; creating opportunity for entrepreneurship; and through diversity and inclusion efforts, helping transform the Greater Knoxville area into a place where everyone can succeed, thrive and enjoy raising their families.

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