The Georgia Center for Opportunity (GCO) is independent, non-partisan, and solutions-focused. Our team is dedicated to creating opportunities for a quality education, fulfilling work, and a healthy family life for all Georgians. To achieve our mission, we research ways to help remove barriers to opportunity in each of these pathways, promote our solutions to policymakers and the public, and help effective and innovative social enterprises deliver results in their communities. Our ultimate goal is to see every Georgian who is willing to seize the opportunities presented to them living a life that can be characterized as truly flourishing.
NON SIBI, SED ALIIS. “NOT FOR SELF, BUT FOR OTHERS.”

JAMES EDWARD OGLETHORPE
We came into 2018 anticipating that it would be our most impactful year yet—that 2018 would truly be what we’ve been calling “the year of opportunity.” And it definitely has been! I’ve been amazed and blessed by all the opportunities we’ve had to help more Georgians enjoy the blessings of quality education, meaningful work, and healthy relationships.

We helped to dramatically increase the size of one of our state’s key school choice measure, bringing real educational opportunity to thousands more students desperately in need of new options.

We launched city-based Hiring Well, Doing Good initiatives to help struggling people find work and discover what you and I know — that work is more than just a source of income; it can be a source of pride, purpose, and wellbeing as well!

We worked with state and federal leaders to promote welfare reforms that protect the vulnerable while at the same time encouraging those who are able to find jobs and, if they’re so inclined, to marry without penalty.

We expanded our Healthy Families Initiative to all of Gwinnett County and doubled the number of community partners, ensuring that relationship enrichment resources are readily available.

We stand on your shoulders. It’s really that simple. Your support is the reason we’re here and able to seize important opportunities to impact lives and our state for the better. We appreciate your financial partnership, your prayers, and your participation in our work.

In the pages of this report, we hope you will see and celebrate the tremendous strides that we’ve made over the past year. We intend to keep this momentum going in 2019 —pressing onward toward greater impact and breaking down barriers that hinder people from developing and exercising their God-given gifts.

Randy Hicks
President & Chief Executive Officer
“EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO ME, MORE THAN ANYTHING, MEANS A GREAT EDUCATION.”

STEVE JOBS

Like many kids his age, Seth is an active nine-year old who loves math, reading books (particularly the Harry Potter series), and music. He’s also very energetic and excels at swimming and ice skating. But because he has autism spectrum disorder, Seth struggles to focus in a traditional classroom and acts out when he’s not challenged or given opportunities for physical activity.

Sadly, because Seth was non-verbal from a young age, he started public school kindergarten with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and was placed in a self-contained classroom where he was given academic work well below his abilities. Frustrated by his lack of progress, Seth’s parents got a Special Needs Scholarship and moved him into private school in first grade, where he was more academically challenged. Yet even here, Seth acted out and they knew that this setting didn’t work either. So, Seth’s parents decided to homeschool their son. His mother now customizes Seth’s academic environment and his school day follows a rhythm of physical activity and school work. For example, Seth might jump on the trampoline for five minutes followed by a focused math or language arts session. Today, Seth performs at his grade level—far beyond his performance in other educational settings.

The unique and burdensome expenses currently incurred by Seth’s parents—music, speech and occupational therapy, curricula, and communication tutoring—would be covered under proposed legislation for Education Savings Accounts (ESA), which aim to improve our state’s Special Needs Scholarship by removing eligibility barriers and making it more flexible and reflective of each student’s specific needs. At the State Capitol, the Georgia Center for Opportunity is fighting to help Seth and others like him continue to excel with the help of ESAs and similar programs.

ADVOCATING FOR SETH TO LIVE UP TO HIS POTENTIAL
LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

House Bill 217: Georgia’s largest school choice program expansion in a decade

House Bill 217 nearly doubles the size of Georgia’s popular Tax Credit Scholarship Program beginning in 2019. Currently, the program is capped at $58 million per year, but with the passage of this new law the cap is raised to $100 million.

Tax-credit scholarships are available to help students including those from low-income, working-class, and minority families attend high-quality private schools that better meet their academic needs. More than 13,000 students in Georgia are benefiting from these scholarships right now. Increasing the cap will allow thousands more students to find the educational environment that best meets their needs.

House Bill 787: Creating greater funding equity for public charter schools

House Bill 787 authorizes more funding for charter schools, bringing them into greater parity with funding for traditional public schools. Before the passage of this bill, students in traditional public schools received a greater financial investment in their education. Now, students from families who choose public charter schools will be penalized less. We hope that greater equity in funding will allow more high quality public charter schools to open or expand to serve students who need that option.

WHAT’S NEXT

Education Savings Accounts

We want Georgia to become the seventh state to pass Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), an innovative way for parents to pay for non-public educational options for their children. Education Savings Accounts allow parents to direct the money the state would have spent on their child to things like tuition, tutors, adaptive technology, therapy, and curriculum to truly customize an education that best meets the child’s needs. While prior efforts to pass ESAs have fallen short, we plan to continue fighting as part of our Policy Solutions Initiative for the passage of this impactful legislation.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- Passed two major bills expanding school choice in Georgia
- GCO supporters sent over 800 emails to lawmakers during the 2018 legislative session
“WE WERE CREATED FOR MEANINGFUL WORK, AND ONE OF LIFE’S GREATEST PLEASURES IS THE SATISFACTION OF A JOB WELL DONE.”

JOHN MAXWELL

Having a felony charge can make it difficult to get a job, so after transitioning in-and-out of jobs in the Atlanta-metro area, Kim was grateful for a position with Tip Top Poultry which allowed her the opportunity to turn her life around.

Tip Top Poultry has become a leader in hiring the formerly incarcerated who have long been out of the workforce. They’ve had great success, which VP of People Services Phil Stroud attributes to the principle of restoring dignity through work.

Kim had no experience in the poultry business when she joined the team, but with a lot of patience and determination she’s mastered each task she was given, becoming a top worker. In six years, she has achieved multiple promotions and met her husband, Terrence, a former inmate who benefited from Tip Top’s second chance program, too. Now happily married for five years, Kim and Terrence are both known as two of Tip Top’s best employees.

According to Kim, “You have to humble yourself coming here. If you want a job, this is a place you can come, you can work, save money, get back on your feet. It’s not going to be easy, it was a hard journey, but it can be done.”
Launched a new city-wide Hiring Well, Doing Good initiative in Columbus, Georgia
Partnered with think tanks in other states to help launch additional Hiring Well, Doing Good initiatives
Released five groundbreaking reports on welfare reform, gaining attention from the White House, members of Congress, and other top leaders

Hiring Well, Doing Good
Laying the foundation for community-led employment in Georgia and beyond

After launching the first Hiring Well, Doing Good (HWDG) effort in GCO’s own backyard of Southwest Gwinnett in 2017, the demand for community-driven employment solutions began to grow. While HWDG Southwest Gwinnett has continued to build momentum, the movement is spreading throughout the state and the Southeast. In 2018, we’re celebrating the successful and quick-moving kickoff of HWDG Columbus, as well as new efforts in partnership with the Alabama Policy Institute and the Beacon Center of Tennessee.

Welfare Reform
A new approach to welfare reform garners state and national attention

As lawmakers in Washington, D.C., began turning their attention to Welfare Reform early in 2018, GCO President and CEO Randy Hicks weighed in, urging lawmakers to approach the issue with “common sense and compassion.” It’s the same approach GCO is advocating for as our team meets with leaders from the Gold Dome to the White House.

“...we believe that communities (not the state or federal government) should be the principal means of helping our neighbors escape poverty. That’s why we work so hard at the local level to expand job training, provide apprenticeships and enlarge other workforce supporters. Although Washington can do much to improve welfare, the best solutions must come locally.”
— Randy Hicks

May 6, 2018

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— Randy Hicks

May 6, 2018
“EDUCATING THE MIND WITHOUT EDUCATING THE HEART IS NO EDUCATION AT ALL.”

ARISTOTLE

XÓCHITL MUNILLA: STRONG FAMILIES FOR LIFE PARTICIPANT AND FACILITATOR

Xóchitl Munilla first heard about the Healthy Families Initiative (HFI) through Stonemill Church, one of HFI’s community partners, and excitedly enrolled her family in the Strong Families for Life workshop. After engaging in this course together, Xóchitl said her family now works more in sync as a cohesive unit and can confidently resolve conflicts.

Seeing a dramatic difference in her own family, Xóchitl wanted to share these new-found tools with others, so she became a Strengthening Families facilitator. Taking this step allowed her the opportunity to work within the community and build confidence in other parents and kids as they interact with one another.

“I learned new things to put into practice as a parent, and began to recognize what I was doing wrong. We need more programs like this one, and I want to see HFI expand to reach more families.”

Through her involvement with HFI as both a participant and facilitator, she has been a strategic reason for the success of the program. It’s through great teachers who are passionate about families and seeing them succeed that HFI excels.
HEALTHY FAMILIES INITIATIVE

For over two decades the Georgia Center for Opportunity has been working to remove barriers to healthy family formation. In the last three years, the Healthy Families Initiative (HFI) has partnered with 30 Gwinnett County businesses, nonprofit organizations and churches to collectively reduce the divorce rate and the number of out-of-wedlock births. Through this collaborative effort, HFI is offering free community workshops promoting healthy family dynamics, romantic relationships, as well as co-parenting relationships.

The county-wide initiative has also entered into its second year of a public campaign, challenging area residents to make a move towards healthier relationships by participating in the initiative’s workshops and special events.

TEAMING UP WITH NATIONAL LEADERS IN FAMILY STUDIES

We have made it our mission at GCO to overcome barriers that threaten family formation and healthy relationships, so GCO has also continued its partnership with subject matter expert Dr. Brad Wilcox, a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Family Studies and Director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, to study local data and help design strategic solutions for creating stronger communities.

PARTNERING WITH KEY COMMUNITY LEADERS

Local businesses, nonprofits and churches are the cornerstone of a community, which is why HFI involves area businesses and organizations. These are the heroes who make this initiative possible. They believe in strong families and communities through positive programs and encouragement.

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IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- Partnered with 30 local businesses for the Healthy Families Initiative
- Launched a comprehensive public relations campaign aimed at promoting healthy relationships
“THINGS DO EXIST THAT ARE WORTH STANDING UP FOR WITHOUT COMPROMISE.”

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

A retired businessman and Georgia Tech alum, Oliver met Joanne - a native Texan - after being introduced by mutual friends. Though they were both widowed at the time, they have been married for 19 years and call their marriage a “second blessing.” Between the two of them, they have seven children, 19 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

While they are building quite a legacy for their family, they are also longtime supporters and members of GCO’s Oglethorpe Legacy Society. We caught up with them to learn more about what drives their giving and continued support for programs that break barriers and build opportunities for Georgians.

Why do you give?
We feel blessed and feel the need and desire to give back. It’s a delight because it’s God’s money, and we finally got that through our heads.

What is the focus of your philanthropy?
We give the bulk to ministries that share Christ and strengthen that within our country. Our giving tends to congregate around the family – we have 37 in our family so family’s pretty big to us. We see the strength in our family when we gather versus friends who have fragmented families – it’s a special blessing to have a healthy family.

Why do you give to Georgia Center for Opportunity?
We’re very pleased with the way they operate, the leadership they have, and the basis on which they do what they do. We like that they’re getting people back to work, supporting education, and working on legislation that matters. They’re also an organization that gets results.

Where do you hope to see GCO in 5 years?
We hope they keep doing the good things they’re doing. This includes continuing to meet cultural issues as they come up. The work they do has a positive impact that affects problems from racism to poverty. It would be really great to see GCO’s poverty research become a reality and create opportunities for people nationwide.

What legacy do you hope to leave through your involvement with Georgia Center for Opportunity?
We would love to see our children and grandchildren look back and say I’m happy that our parents and grandparents supported the things that they did – they were meaningful in the real sense of the word and not just fluff. We tell them all the time, “Whatever we have, I’d rather spend with you than leave it to you.” We think our giving will be a model to them and a way of loving God; it’s a way of expressing our faith and our gratitude. Someday, we hope our giving will be an encouragement for them to do the same.
5% increase in total number of donors in 2018 fiscal year

48% of donors increased their giving in 2018 fiscal year

Thank you for helping create thriving communities, where people have the chance to flourish.

Chairman's Circle ($10,000+)
- David and Donna Allman
- Atlas Network
- The Lynde & Harry Bradley Foundation
- Bradley-Turner Foundation, Inc.
- Steve and Kent Butler
- Adolph Coors Foundation
- John and Camee Fetz
- Rick and Barb Gaby
- Gulo and Suzette Gianterce
- Google
- Frank and Sally Hanna
- Randy and Marilee Hatcher
- Ken and Tina Manning
- The Neighbor Company
- Brian and Sharon Owens
- Roe Foundation
- Oliver and Joanne Sale
- Keith and Tamara Schneider
- CKS Packaging
- Jerry and Judy Kaye Thrame
- Walton Family Foundation

Breakthrough Society ($1,000+)
- Roy and Sandy Abernethy
- Jamie and Lynne Allen
- Kevin and Amy Bemiss
- Susan and Tim Bentson
- Dan Boone III
- Kevin and Vernadette Broyles
- Bob and C.J. Bruce
- David and Kathy Carr
- Doug and Jacqueline Cates
- Eric and Laura Cochling
- Rowland and Cindy Cocks
- Erik and Sherrid Daniels
- Karin Douglas
- John and Jan Featherston
- Link and Carla Forester
- Chris and Courtenay Gabriel
- American Philanthropic
- Junious McLean Jr. and Joyce Auld
- Hal and Gina Averett
- Rick and Nancy Baggs
- Donald and Kaye Berg
- Lee and Laura Biehl
- Shari Bracy
- Ed and Andrea Bransen
- Casey and Sally Brown
- Pete Carachi
- Steve and Rosalind Chapman
- Bruce and Donna Cook
- Henry Croci
- George and Dawn Curry
- Ben and Renee Davidson
- Clint Day
- Paul Davson
- Phil and Lynne Drake
- Charles and Nancy Drummond
- Bruce and Nancy Dutcher
- Mike and Linda Ebert
- Georgia Transportation Alliance
- Reid and Hope Haley
- Robert and Trena Hargreaves
- Mark and Sherry Harrell
- Tyler and Kathryn Harrison
- Jo Hicks
- Randy and Marilyn Hicks
- Monte and Phyllis Johnson
- Craig and Angie Jones
- Jason and Natalie Jones
- David and Jeni Knight
- Craig A Lacey
- Kevin and Becky Loesch
- Bill and Lisa McGahee
- Tom and Donna McManus
- Brian and Caroline McNeely
- Hugh Murphy
- National School Choice Week
- Larry Nemmann
- Galen and Lynn Oekkers
- Perimeter Church
- Al and Tom Petrangeli
- Alan and Betsy Ramsay
- Bobby and Beth Reagan
- Bill and Evelyn Rodgers
- Otto and Sandy Scardos
- Doug and Nancy Silva
- Richard and Dee Dee Stephens
- Tim and Marie Tessopoulou
- Chip and Janet Vaughn
- Michael and Holly Villa
- Greg and Jan Winchester

Sustaining Member ($100+)
- American Philanthropic
- Juans Maclay Jr. and Joyce Auld
- Hal and Gina Averett
- Rick and Nancy Baggs
- Donald and Kaye Berg
- Lee and Laura Biehl
- Shari Bracy
- Ed and Andrea Bransen
- Casey and Sally Brown
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- Phil and Lynne Drake
- Charles and Nancy Drummond
- Bruce and Nancy Dutcher
- Mike and Linda Ebert
- Richard and Linda Finch
- Donna Fother
- Elke Frosted
- Gary Gibbs
- The Greater Gwinnett Reentry Alliance
- Carlos and Katherine Greene
- Ben and Susan Harrell
- Spencer Hughes
- Lee and Melba Hartley
- Robert and Lorelle Isley
- Dwayne and Alvilda Jones
- Scott Jones
- Mike and Barbara Kaiser
- Burton and Gina Keller
- Michael and Carole Kooi
- Tom and Susan Larkey
- Robin McGonigal
- Shane and Kelly McGonigal
- Bill and Mary McManus
- Aiken and Barbara McKnight
- John and Patricia Messervy
- Mike and Carol Morris
- Wil Morris
- Audrey Mullen
- Jose Perez
- Ed and Heather Pierpoint
- David and Laura Pisey
- Stephen and Meliny Rabin
- Roger and Mary Kay Ream
- Jeff and Teresa Richards
- Michael and Diane Saborn
- Neil Shorthouse and Patty Pflum
- Paul and Shirley Simpson
- Mary Lee Sims
- George and Linda Southgate
- Dawn Steele
- Siu and Judy Tjoe
- Joseph Vega
- Joyce Whitted
- Bill and Rochelle Wills
- The Robert D. Fowler Family YMCA
- Mike and Carol Morris
- Wil Morris
- Audrey Mullen
- Jose Perez
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- The Robert D. Fowler Family YMCA

Thank you for helping create thriving communities, where people have the chance to flourish.
**TOTAL REVENUE**

- Individuals: $969,819
- Foundations: $1,202,671
- Corporations: $55,564
- Other: $3,285
- **TOTAL REVENUE**: $2,231,339

**TOTAL EXPENSES**

- Program: $1,783,899
- Administrative: $153,455
- Fundraising: $155,642
- **TOTAL EXPENSES**: $2,092,996

**PROGRAM BREAKDOWN**

- Breakthrough Norcross: $65,242
- Education: $396,072
- Employment: $445,922
- Family Formation: $697,192
- Program General: $179,471
**DAD FACTOR: PRESENCE**  
*June 9, 2018*  
HFI recognized dads in a special way this year with a father-focused breakfast. Guest speakers provided support for dads along with tips and strategies on healthy living, healthy relationships, entrepreneurship, mentorship, and much more.

**ARTHUR BROOKS AND THE POWER OF STORYTELLING IN LEADERSHIP**  
*May 23, 2018*  
The Georgia Center for Opportunity and Georgia Public Policy Foundation hosted a breakfast with Arthur Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute, who explained how we can all use the power of storytelling to become more unifying as leaders in our communities, families, and places of work.

**HIRING WELL, DOING GOOD COLUMBUS**  
*May 22, 2018*  
The Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce partnered with GCO to launch Hiring Well, Doing Good Columbus at the start of the summer. The luncheon was a collaboration of civic, business, and non-profit leaders for a discussion about the human need to be productive through work, and addressing the challenges of hiring the underemployed, plus the positive benefits of lives changed through the purpose and dignity found in meaningful work.

**LOVE IS A CHOICE: I CHOOSE YOU**  
*February 10, 2018*  
In an effort to emphasize the importance of strong marriages in the community, the Healthy Families Initiative hosted a romantic evening for married couples to renew their vows and their dedication to a healthy marriage relationship.

**TWOGETHER FOREVER: YOU AND I**  
*November 4, 2017*  
Romantic relationships need time invested into them, so the Healthy Families Initiative provided a date night for couples of all ages to enjoy time together having dinner, dancing, and playing couples’ games.

**PUBS, PEOPLE AND PURPOSE**  
*September 14, 2017*  
Last fall, GCO utilized the great space at Monday Night Brewing, to host an evening centered around work. Rodney Bullard, Vice President of Community Affairs for Chick-Fil-A, David Miller, Director of Princeton Faith & Work Initiative, and Randy Hicks, CEO of Georgia Center for Opportunity, led the discussion surrounding the higher meaning of work in hopes of starting further discussions about what it means for the average worker, executive, entrepreneur, and policymaker.
RANDY HICKS
President & Chief Executive Officer
“Sports has always been one of my very best outlets for staying healthy and maintaining balance in my life. I love it and need to do more of it!”

ERIC COCHLING
Executive Vice President and General Counsel
“Juggling’s a metaphor for my life right now. At home, it’s raising three kids who are always on the go. At work, it’s helping to manage a rapidly-growing organization.”

BUZZ BROCKWAY
Vice President of Public Policy
“When thrown correctly a boomerang returns to you. Through strategic research and planning I hope to see great returns for Georgia’s citizens, too.”

BILL RODGERS
Vice President of Workforce Solutions
“There’s no better feeling than rooting on your favorite team. At GCO, I get to support the Dawgs and be part of the winning roster making our state stronger! Go Dawgs!”

KRISTEN BARKER
Program Manager, Hiring Well, Doing Good Columbus
“I don’t need things to fill my life. The truly meaningful memories are created from the work we do and relationships we build along the way.”

KATHERINE GREENE
Healthy Families Initiative Program Manager
“Being a wife and mother, I am always on the run for my family. Now, I get the awesome privilege to put my ‘soles to the pavement’ to run for all families providing them with resources and skills to have healthy and strong families.”

KATELYN KING
Director of Operations
“As the Director of Operations, my goal is to enable GCO to successfully hit the target of our vision.”

JAMIE LORD
Director of Government Affairs
“I may be small, but I’m scrappy—which has served me well in my years fighting for opportunity at the state Capitol.”

KELLY MCGONIGAL
Director of Development
“My two sons bring so much joy to my life, and I’m grateful to be able to play a small role in creating a better future for them.”

LESLIE PREVEAUX
Healthy Families Initiative Outreach Coordinator
“One of the most fulfilling parts of my job is watching families stand up and recite that they love each other and have fun together. It blesses me to know I help bring lifelong skills that promote the healthy emotional growth of youth.”
DAWN STEELE
Director of Breakthrough Programs

“I’m a George Washington buff, and there’s a great story about how he used pineapples as a show of gracious hospitality. I like to surround myself with things that remind me of his leadership.”

JOSIAH VEGA
Development Associate

“Music and sports have always been a part of my life and remain a constant source of motivation, joy, and relationship as I go about my life. Go 9ers and long live rock!”

JOYCE WHITTED
Director of Healthy Families Initiative

“My heart is at its fullest when I get the opportunity to enrich the lives of families and friends. Love on your family and let them love on you!”

CHRISTY RIGGINS
Director of Communications

“I treasure my original copy of Booker T. Washington’s ‘Up From Slavery.’ It’s a good reminder of the power of hopeful and dedicated souls.”

Board of Directors:

Gerald Thames, Board Chairman
Director of the Thames Family Foundation

Randy Hicks, GCO CEO & President
Elder, Perimeter Church; Board of Directors, Corners Outreach

Shaunti Feldhahn
Social researcher, best-selling author, and popular speaker

Karin Douglas
Strategic Nonprofit Consultant

Tim Bentsen
Executive in Residence, J.M. Tull School of Accounting at Terry College of Business at University of Georgia

Former Managing Partner at KPMG

Tony Kitchens
Field Director, Prison Fellowship

Keith Schneider
President & CEO, GPSTrackit

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