

Sharing & Caring

Serving The Midlands for 39 years

Announcing The Jim Hudson Challenge

The Cooperative Ministry needs 20 car donations; Jim Hudson Automotive will match donations 1:1

From October through December, Jim Hudson Automotive Group will match every car donation to The Cooperative Ministry up to 20 cars - an effort that could total as much as \$40,000 for program services.

The Jim Hudson Challenge was announced in June at The Cooperative Ministry's annual fiscal year-end celebration luncheon held this year at First Presbyterian Church in Columbia.

Speaking to board members, partnering church leaders, and friends, Jim Hudson praised The Cooperative Ministry's history of service within the community. A man of deep faith, Hudson said he felt moved to help The Cooperative Ministry raise much-needed funds for its clients - especially during this COVID-19 pandemic. In 2013, then Gov. Nikki Haley presented Hudson with the Order of the Palmetto - South Carolina's highest civilian honor in recognition of "extraordinary work and dedication to the citizens of our state."



The Cooperative Ministry's Car Program accepts cars in any condition, provides free towing within a 50-mile radius of Columbia, and sells cars at a Midlands auction - keeping all funds within the local community. The sale of one car can help up to five families with basic needs - rent or utility assistance, new work boots, non-slip shoes, and emergency food.

Beth Irick, The Cooperative Ministry's Chief Executive Officer, said, "We are so appreciative to Jim Hudson for this very generous expression of help that will benefit many of our clients."

Bill Taber, Director of Crisis Assistance at The Cooperative Ministry, said the revenue from 40 cars

Please Support The Jim Hudson Challenge
With Your Car Donation



**THE
COOPERATIVE
MINISTRY**

Visit coopmin.org or call 799-2428

Jim Hudson
AUTOMOTIVE GROUP



- 20 from the community and a matching 20 from Jim Hudson Automotive - will help more than 100 families with an estimated 75 percent of them affected in some measurable way by COVID-19.

"The broader impact of The Jim Hudson Challenge will be that more than 200 family members, including children, will avoid homelessness. We should never forget that Columbia ranks 8th nationally in forced evictions," Taber said.

To donate a car please call Scott Vaughan at (803) 799-2428 or visit www.coopmin.org/donate-your-car.

In 2022, The Cooperative Ministry turns 40!

By Beth H. Irick
Chief Executive Officer

In 2022, The Cooperative Ministry will celebrate its 40th Anniversary - four decades of serving the Midlands community. Our staff is working on plans to celebrate this important milestone throughout next year. We are inviting churches, businesses, civic clubs, and individuals to join us in some way during 2022.

The Cooperative Ministry was named very appropriately. In 1981, five downtown Columbia churches began conversations about a new cooperative method aimed at helping those in need. Those five churches were First Baptist Church, First Presbyterian Church, Main Street United Methodist Church, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, and Washington Street United Methodist Church. Today, we have 53 partnering congregations that provide much-needed financial support, volunteerism, clothing and food donations, and prayer.

In 1981, those five original partners met with Community Care – an interfaith organization in Columbia - and a Downtown Ministry Action study was commissioned. How could the faith community avoid a duplication of services and how could the faith community establish a relationship with families to better understand crises and needs?

In 1982, a Project Advisory Council was established, and it created a coordination of service programs called the “Downtown Cooperative Ministry Program.” On Monday, Sept. 20, 1982, The Cooperative Ministry began offering services to the community.

In 1985, The Cooperative Ministry’s Advisory Committee secured full-time staffing and ended its connection with Community Care. In 1986, The Cooperative Ministry was incorporated by the State of South Carolina and moved to Bethel AME Church



on Sumter Street. From 1987-1995, the ministry was housed at the Columbia Housing Authority before moving to 1928 Taylor Street. In 2006, we moved to our current location at 3821 W. Beltline Blvd. A 2017 capital campaign paid our mortgage, ensuring we are now a debt-free organization.

All along that rich timeline, services were added to meet the basic needs of people and then help them on the road to sustainability. In recent years, we have annually helped more than 13,000 people each year - even during this season of global pandemic. Our ten unique services include those aimed at short-term crisis assistance and long-term sustainability. It’s not unusual for me to meet clothing bank donors, now self-sufficient, who were once served here as crisis clients.



Anniversaries are important milestones and call us to pause and reflect on relationships and the value of them. The Cooperative Ministry’s 40th Anniversary is important in that way. During the next year, we will reflect and celebrate the individuals and milestones that moved us from 1982 to 2022. We will also take advantage of this anniversary to look forward at what we might

accomplish in the years ahead.

Our January 2022 issue of this newsletter will focus specifically on how you - and your organizations - can join us in moving our mission forward. It’s going to be a fantastic year and I am so thankful that so many in our community believe in our mission.

I hope you and yours have a wonderful fall season filled with time for family and friends and cooler temperatures.

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Tax prep volunteers needed for 2022 tax season

The Cooperative Ministry is recruiting volunteers interested in serving thousands of individuals with free income tax assistance from February to April 2022. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program helps lift thousands of hard-working South Carolinians out of poverty, saving costly tax prep fees, and ensuring individuals receive full refunds and credits on their income taxes.



VOLUNTEERS - Pictured are VITA volunteers John Baynes and Diana Holmes, left, who have both served at various locations, including The Cooperative Ministry building, for the past five years. Pictured right is USC Accounting student Rebecca Miller, who has volunteered for two years within the VITA Program.

Who can volunteer? Anyone over the age of 18. VITA volunteers range in age from 20 to 93, and come from all parts of our community - retirees, the military, college students, attorneys, wage-earners, working professionals, and homemakers just to name a cross-section.

No prior tax knowledge or tax skills are needed. No prior computer skills are needed. The

Cooperative Ministry, working with the Internal Revenue Service, provides all necessary training and certifications before tax season begins.

Volunteers have a flexible schedule and, because of numerous locations throughout the Midlands, can often find a place to serve that's close to home. Volunteers will even have the option to assist in-person with safety measures or work

remotely.

This year, in 2021, volunteers completed more than 9,500 tax returns for low- and moderate-income individuals throughout the Midlands.

Ready to sign up? Need more information? Please visit www.coopmin.org/vita or communicate with Maggie Fant, VITA Volunteer Coordinator, at (803) 799-5609 or by email to mfant@coopmin.org.

A partner's testimony

By Rev. Dr. Ellen Fowler Skidmore
Senior Pastor
Forest Lake Presbyterian Church

Although our suburban congregation does get some walk-in traffic asking for help, most of those who call or come by to ask for help are people who live in our neighborhood. They are working – often underemployed or for minimum wage – but who cannot make ends meet.

There is Stanley, who spent some time in jail and who, although in his 60's, works uneven hours in a local seafood shop for minimum wage. He is a fragile diabetic. The Cooperative Ministry helped him with a giant utility bill that grew beyond his ability to pay when he was in the hospital.

There is Martin, a middle-aged man who suffered a heat-induced heart attack that almost killed him while working in the kitchen of a chain restaurant.



After all the ICU bills came due, the restaurant offered Martin under \$5,000 for his trouble “to settle his claim.” The Cooperative Ministry has helped Martin with financial support, financial counseling, car repairs, and utility help.

Then there is Barbara, who works full-time, on minimum wage, in the kitchen of an elementary school. She does not make enough money to pay all the bills and then maintain her home. When her husband died, things got tough financially. The Cooperative Ministry helped Barbara with her utilities so that she could work to feed her children.

Our church supports The Cooperative Ministry because we believe in the dignity of all people and because we want those who are trying to work to know that they have not been sacrificed on the altar of economic growth. Forest Lake Presbyterian Church sees them as Children of God. The Cooperative Ministry sees them as Children of God. We have a lot in common. That is why we love and support The Cooperative Ministry.

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Beth H. Irick, Chief Executive Officer
Scott Vaughan, Director,
Community Awareness

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up to **FIVE** people with basic needs

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