

# Sharing & Caring

Serving The Midlands for 40 years

## Fulfilling the mission to help self-sufficiency is the aim of new approach to client engagement

The Cooperative Ministry is making a minor organizational change that will result in a deeper client engagement and fulfillment of the organizational mission to see people become self-sufficient.

For years, The Cooperative Ministry's services have been divided into two program areas: Crisis Assistance and Sustainability. Crisis Assistance provided short-term help, like help with rent and utilities, and Sustainability focused on more long-term solutions to poverty issues. Unfortunately, many of those engaging in Crisis Assistance were not always pursuing services offered through Sustainability.

Beginning Friday, April 15, Crisis Assistance and Sustainability services were merged into a new area of work called Client Engagement, focusing on cultivating a relationship between The Cooperative Ministry and the client, going far beyond a one-time transaction. Ed Palekas, who served as director of Sustainability Programs, is now the director of Client Engagement.

Chief Program Officer Wanda Pearson says emergency help with rent and utility bills remains available for those not in the workforce due to age or disability. For all others, The Cooperative Ministry wants to see people get on the road to financial well-being.

"If a client has regular income but can't seem to pay bills on time, we expect that they would engage in a deeper intervention to get at the root causes of their financial problems," Pearson says. "Financial peace of mind starts with living within your means, saving regularly for rainy days, and paying bills on time. Our staff and volunteers who are certified financial



### Interested in Volunteering?

For its new Client Engagement area of work, The Cooperative Ministry needs volunteers to interview and engage with clients as coaches. For more information, contact Ed Palekas at [epalekas@coopmin.org](mailto:epalekas@coopmin.org).

health coaches can now work with individuals for 3 to 6 months, helping clients create solutions to their immediate financial challenges and plans for protecting their household budgets against future shocks."

"It's not a radical change," Pearson says. "Many anti-poverty initiatives have been moving this way for quite some time."

The Cooperative Ministry will not add new programs or eliminate the tried-and-true but break down the organizational barrier that has separated crisis assistance and sustainability services. Now, all services will be offered through one client-focused area of work.

The Cooperative Ministry offers financial assistance; free clothing, furniture, and food; free tax preparation; help with education to get a better job; financial coaching; and insurance counseling.

## Be our Friend with a recurring, monthly gift

To accentuate this year's 40th Anniversary of The Cooperative Ministry, we are hoping for 40 friends who will give a recurring, monthly gift of \$25 or more.

It doesn't seem like a lot, but \$25 for 12 months quickly becomes \$300, and \$300 given by 40 friends generates \$12,000.



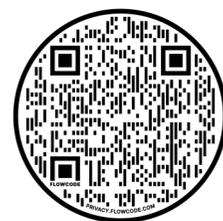
Here's how that \$12,000 will impact our clients:

- It can help as many as 60 people with basic needs like rent or utility assistance. We know this assistance helps prevent homelessness in our community.
- It can help as many as eight people connect with a certified volunteer financial coach with a goal of financial empowerment. Every person in those households benefits from stability, too.
- It can help 40 people receive a GED, license, or certification needed for a new and better job.

Your \$25 monthly gift, joined with others over 12 months, can have a tremendous impact. Recurring gifts allow us to forecast the services we can offer and how many people we can serve. Scheduling your gift through our website makes it easy for donors.

The Friends who support The Cooperative Ministry with recurring gifts will receive 12 of our new Honor Cards. As your gift is processed, each month, you can send a card to a friend, expressing your gift made in that person's honor.

Will you help us reach that goal of \$12,000 (or more) during this Anniversary year? To participate and schedule your recurring gift, please visit [www.coopmin.org](http://www.coopmin.org) or use your mobile telephone and take a photograph of the QR Code pictured here. On our donation page, you will see a box where you can mark your gift as recurring.



Thank you! Thank you for believing in our mission, and thank you for all you do to help those in need find a bright, new future.

~ Beth H. Irick, Chief Executive Officer

## 'Downtown' Mary Brown had legacy of service

The late Mary Brown, a member of Washington Street United Methodist Church, loved people and volunteerism throughout Columbia. Vibrant and active, she acquired many nicknames, including "Downtown" Mary Brown.



Mary loved The Cooperative Ministry - so much that her 2013 obituary notice asked for donations to benefit the organization.

For years, The Cooperative Ministry's emergency food pantry has been known by a simple sign - 'Mary's Pantry' - along the wall. Many of those on tours have asked about the pantry's namesake.

Now, thanks to a gift from Mary's friend, Brian Murrell, our emergency food pantry will include Mary's photograph and a written tribute to her



Brian Murrell, left, with Beth Irick, CEO, The Cooperative Ministry

legacy of service.

In 2021, despite COVID-19, The Cooperative Ministry distributed 1,042 emergency food boxes and free food vouchers to area food banks. Much of that food passed through 'Mary's Pantry.'

## As Bill Taber retires, he reflects and calls for faithfulness in small things

Before news of my retirement had gone public, I got a voice message from a pastor I've worked with over the years. The message said, "I hear you're retiring. Good for you, but I'm also grieving and will miss you very much. You know that 'retirement' is not in the Bible, don't you?" And then the pastor continued, "I have someone I want to send over who needs help . . ."



What a great metaphor for my final days at The Cooperative Ministry. I am eagerly looking forward to spending more time in my woodshop and yard, especially with my wife (who has agreed to my retirement if I spend lots of time outside, leaving her in peace.) Even with the joy, I am also grieving. I have met a whole bunch of people that are just downright impressive. I've gotten calls from people who wanted to help someone in dire straits. They weren't calling to hand off the problem. They were willing to get into the muck and mire that many clients experience every day. They just wanted advice or where to turn for resources. I will deeply miss those people!

Another part of my days at The Cooperative Ministry has been watching the parade of donors and volunteers arriving day after day. You filled my heart (and not mine alone) with wonder and joy as you bore witness to the love of God in you. Glory be to God for His unfathomable mercies. I want you to know your gifts, work, and efforts matter in ways you may not have known. I will miss that parade.

And I will truly miss the next person who needs help. They have taught me much about hope, respect, resourcefulness, and faith. I am grateful that although I'm retiring, neither you nor The Cooperative Ministry has forgotten that retirement is not in the Bible. Keep on keeping on. Be faithful in your small things, and God bless you. ~ Bill Taber



### The proceeds from every car donation bless those in need

Because The Cooperative Ministry's Car Program is managed in-house, eliminating third-party fees, a single car donation can bless as many as five families with basic needs.

The Cooperative Ministry accepts cars in all conditions - even those that no longer run or have flat tires. Every car has some value at auction - value that helps others. Towing is free within 50 miles of Columbia.

**TO DONATE A CAR  
PLEASE CALL (803) 799-2428**

## Volunteers needed

Retirees, college students, stay-at-home parents, and groups from churches, corporations, and neighborhoods - everyone can find a place to serve at The Cooperative Ministry. We provide a safe and secure environment for service.

Sorting clothes in the Clothing Bank  
Front-end reception  
Data entry  
Tax preparation  
Seasonal landscaping and painting

Volunteerism is easy. Contact Rhemie Gantz at [rgantz@coopmin.org](mailto:rgantz@coopmin.org) or (803) 799-0932.



**THE COOPERATIVE MINISTRY**  
SERVING THE MIDLANDS SINCE 1982

In 1992, a decade after its organization, The Cooperative Ministry's clothing bank was opened.

Today, as then, all of our clothing is distributed free to clients. The gift of clothing can relax budget dollars for use toward a utility bill or rent.

In 2021, clients received 15,040 free clothing items for use at work and school.

**THE COOPERATIVE MINISTRY**  
**3821 WEST BELTLINE BLVD.**  
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Beth H. Irick, Chief Executive Officer  
Scott Vaughan, Director,  
Community Awareness

**Serving the Midlands for 40 Years**

**THE  
COOPERATIVE  
MINISTRY**

**IS PARTICIPATING!**

**5.3.2022**

[midlandsgives.org](http://midlandsgives.org)

**18-HOUR ONLINE  
GIVING EVENT**



**Midlands Gives**

CENTRAL CAROLINA  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

