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United Christian Ministries of Jackson County welcomes new director

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Selby

By Beth Lawrence

United Christian Ministries is under new leadership, and the new leader's wish is to embody the last word in the organization's name.

"I'm retired, but I wanted to still serve in some sort of way," Ann Selby said. "I want to give back. I have a very blessed life, and I just want to serve the people in this county."

Selby took over as UCM director on May 25 when former director Karen Johnson retired.

She and her family have lived and worshiped in Jackson County for 32 years. Selby earned a Bachelor of Science from Western Carolina University.

Selby is earnestly service oriented; even her career as a property manager for Section 8 housing was service related.

After she retired, Selby asked God to show her how she could serve him and the community. The answer she received was United Christian Ministries.

"I'm very faith based," Selby said. "(The answer came) through another friend that UCM was still looking for somebody for this position. I was not looking for a job. So, it definitely was a God moment that I ended up here."

Over the years she has volunteered with the American Cancer Society and helped with hospital fundraisers but never UCM. She had heard of the organization and had donated but did not have time to volunteer there before her conversation with God.

Selby does not have big plans to shake things up as would some people stepping into a new position, but she does have goals.

One goal is to increase the amount of funds available to purchase food for the food pantry. Donations from churches and individuals are down, and donations from local supermarkets can sometimes be less than expected.

Though donations have decreased, clients have increased.

"We've given out 75,000 pounds of food so far this year," she said. "Compared to 2021, when 75,000 was the entire year. We're only six months in."

Another goal is to have more canned food drives and increase UCM's presence in the community.

At some point, Selby also wants to build a covered area for volunteers. The area would give volunteers and clients shelter during food pickups on rainy days.

UCM is also hoping to add an additional freezer to the pantry.

Keeping the nonprofit going and continuing to provide help to residents in need is crucial, Selby said.

"It's huge," she said. "Without organizations like this, I think a lot of people would be falling through the cracks. We need all the donations that we can receive."

The nonprofit also needs volunteers.

Selby has been spreading the word, encouraging folks to volunteer even for an hour if they can.

She hopes her work in the business community will translate to UCM serving both the agency and the community well.

She describes herself as orderly, task and deadline oriented and good at managing schedules and funding.

Working with families who qualify for Section 8 prepared her to work compassionately with the clients UCM serves.

"I'm helping people, just in a different way," Selby said. "Which is fantastic."