

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



United Christian
Ministries
of Jackson County



A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2023 has been a year of continued growth here at United Christian Ministries. Every day, dozens of families come to us for help. We provide food, financial assistance, and support; and more importantly, caring and compassion.

The heart of our food pantry lies in the tireless dedication of our volunteers. These individuals are the unseen heroes, the backbone of our ministry. They arrive early to unload deliveries, sort donations, and meticulously stock the pantry. Then our doors open, and they greet clients with dignity and respect, offering a listening ear, a friendly word, and a reminder that they are not alone. Our hope is that anyone who needs help will come to UCM, and leave not just with food, but with a sense of connection and hope.

We also work closely with our community partners to assist families with financial emergencies, such as impending eviction or loss of utilities, or a need for heating propane or life-saving medication. By joining with agencies such as Social Services, Mountain Projects, Neighbors in Need, and many more, we help families when they have no where else to turn.

Our programs are 100% funded by donations and grants. To everyone who supports UCM, whether with your financial support, your volunteer time, or donations of pantry items, we say “Thank you!” Your support helps to nourish our neighbors in body and in spirit, and is a testament to the transformative impact of human kindness.

ANN SELBY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Pictured on front cover:

- Cullowhee Baptist Church youth helping pack food bags
- Student volunteers helping at the Christmas Bag Packing Event
- A mobile food pantry held at Cullowhee Valley Elementary School
- Client Heather Brancati giving a ‘thank you card’ to UCM

IN THE PANTRY

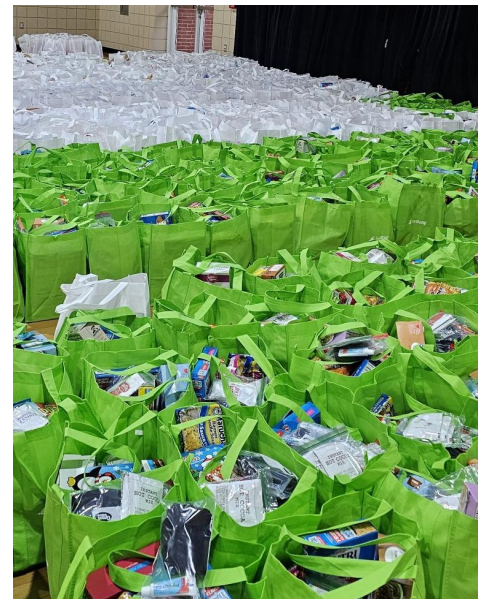


United Christian Ministries was primarily established as a food pantry for Jackson County residents. The pantry has grown from one small room in 1989 to over 1,000 square feet today. Our shelves are packed with dried beans, canned vegetables, rice, soup, pasta, spaghetti sauce, cereal, oatmeal, pancake mix, syrup, macaroni and cheese, ramen, SpaghettiOs, canned fruit, canned tuna and chicken, breads, fresh fruits, potatoes, onions, lettuce, carrots, frozen meats, deli items, bakery items, and more!

Our neighbors can visit the pantry as often as every two weeks. A family of four typically takes home 12 grocery bags of food. Our pantry also offers personal hygiene products such as soap, toothpaste, shampoo, toilet paper, feminine products, toothbrushes, diapers, wipes, and deodorant. We also assist Jackson County's homeless population - between 80-100 individuals. Many of these folks come to UCM on a regular basis to get something to eat. We provide them with bottled water, deli sandwiches, snacks, and personal hygiene items. We welcome our homeless neighbors to come every day for a meal.

We offer additional food support at Thanksgiving and Christmas. At Thanksgiving, we create a meal kit that contains vegetables, stuffing, cake mix, frosting, bread mix, and a ham.

Our largest food project of the year is the "Christmas Food Bags for Jackson County Schoolchildren" project. Local schools let us know how many families need extra food support for the long winter break, churches donate the thousands of items needed, then volunteers fill the bags and deliver them to the schools. In 2023 we provided over 500 bags of food to local families.



Did you know? The food in the pantry comes from MANNA Foodbank (we order every 2 weeks); Food Lion (donations 6 days per week); WalMart (donations 3 days per week); Starbucks (donations once a week), Dollar General (donations once a week); and Pizza Hut (donations once a week). Donations also come from individuals, churches, students, and others.

HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS

Any Jackson County resident is welcome to come to United Christian Ministries, regardless of income or any other factor. 31% of our clients identify themselves as disabled; 5% are veterans, and 7% are homeless. About half of our clients make less than \$10,000 per year.

WHAT OUR CLIENTS THINK

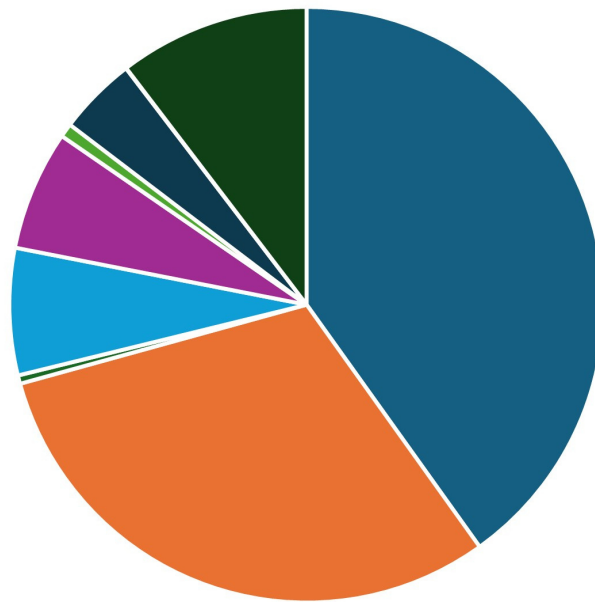
We conducted a client survey in the fall of 2023 that was completed by over 80 families. Here are their responses:

- *Has UCM treated you kindly and with courtesy?* 100% responded 'yes'
- *Does the food you receive help you maintain a healthy diet?* 99% responded 'yes'
- *Are there other foods you prefer or would be better for you?* 73% said 'no.' Of those that said 'yes,' they asked for more gluten free and organic options, more diabetic options, cheese, and milk.
- *Are our open hours adequate and enable you to receive our services?* 96% responded 'yes'
- *Do you receive assistance from other organizations?* 23% said 'yes'
- *How many miles from UCM do you live?* Distances ranged from 2 miles to 25. The average drive was 8 miles.
- *What is your greatest ongoing need?* Clients identified food, financial aid, transportation, cooking, housing, and clothing as their greatest needs.
- *What comments or suggestions do you have for UCM?* "Keep being kind"
- *Is there anything else you would like to share?*
 - "Thanks for everything."
 - "You are a blessing."
 - "You're a great help to elderly and disabled."
 - "Always so caring."
 - "Everyone is so friendly and helpful."
 - "Always feel so welcomed and unashamed."
 - "Thank you. You've helped me in my toughest times."
 - "I did mission work for twenty years, distributing food and clothing. Now it seems strange to be on the receiving end. God bless you all."



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

In 2023 we paid over 650 bills totaling \$95,506



■ Power ■ Rent ■ Rx ■ Oil/Propane ■ Gas ■ Auto ■ Water ■ Home repair ■ Motel

\$ 29,922

The amount paid to local landlords. Over 100 families did not get evicted from their homes because UCM helped pay their overdue rent.

166

The number of families protected from utilities disconnection in 2023. UCM paid \$38,607 in electrical bills and \$6,736 in gas bills.

FOOD SUPPORT

3171

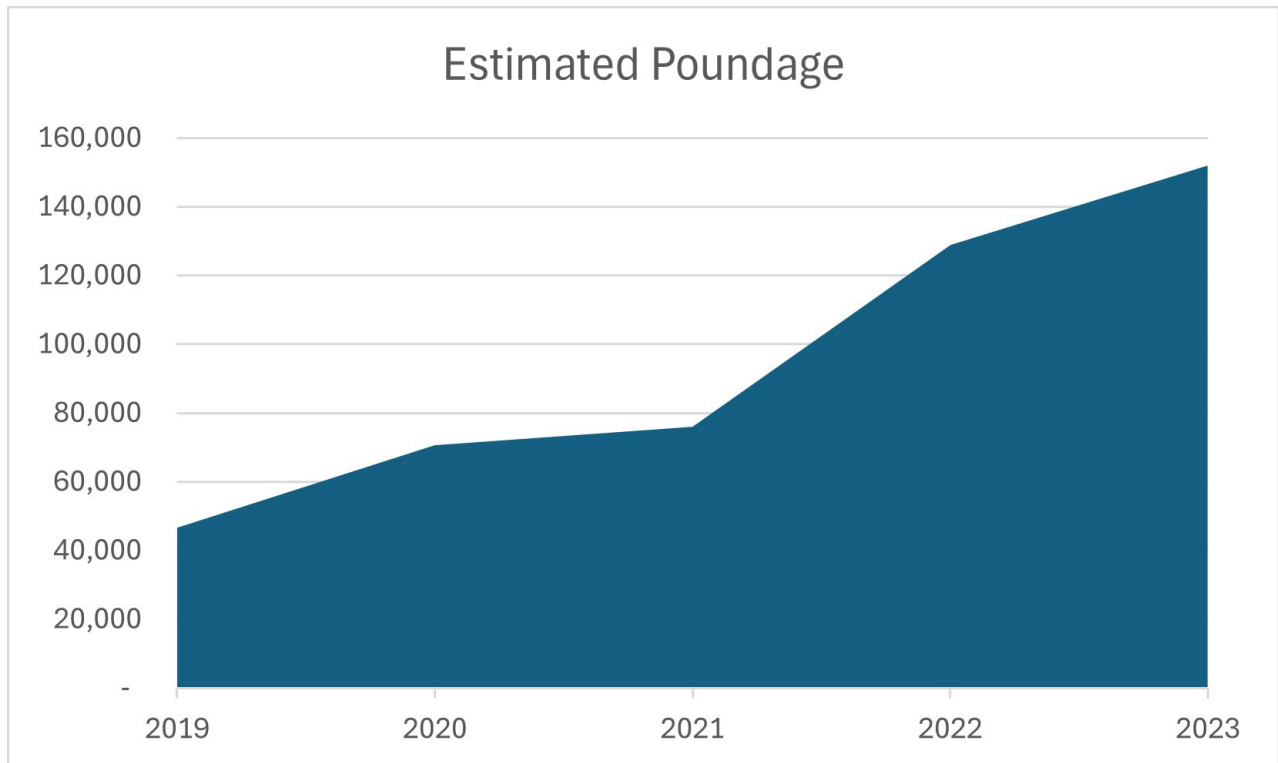
Number of client visits to the pantry in 2023

1476

Number of clients who received personal items

430

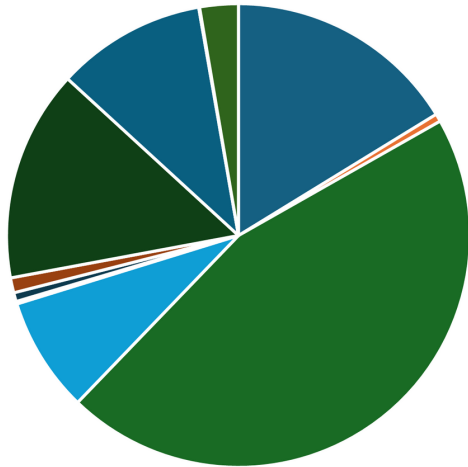
Number of first-time clients in 2023. The number of families who visited UCM for the first time rose 11% in 2023. In 2022, we helped 387 new clients, and in 2021 we helped 187 new families. First-time clients have increased 230% since 2021.



In 2023, we distributed over 152,000 pounds of food.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Total Revenue

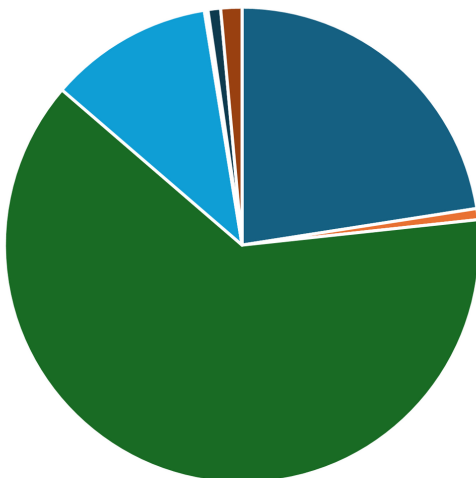


- Churches
- Business
- Donations
- Unrestricted Grants
- Church Related Groups
- Memorial
- Fundraising
- Vanguard Cash Invest
- Individuals
- In Honor
- Restricted Grants
- Vanguard Invest

United Christian Ministries is supported by a combination of donations, grants, and fundraising. Donations account for 72% of our income, with the majority of those donations coming from individual donors. Churches generously give both financial donations as well as donations of pantry items. Donations also come from local businesses and civic groups.

In 2023, 25% of our income came from grants. We are truly grateful to our grantors: The Brown Family Foundation, Church of the Good Shepherd (Cashiers), Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation, Jackson County Government, North Carolina Community Foundation, the Philip L. Van Every Foundation, Rotary Club of Sylva, and the Walmart Foundation.

Donations



- Churches
- Business
- Donations
- Church Related Groups
- Memorial
- Fundraising
- Individuals
- In Honor

Every donation, no matter how big or how small, makes a positive impact on our community. With your help, we are able to consistently keep our Jackson County neighbors fed and housed.

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